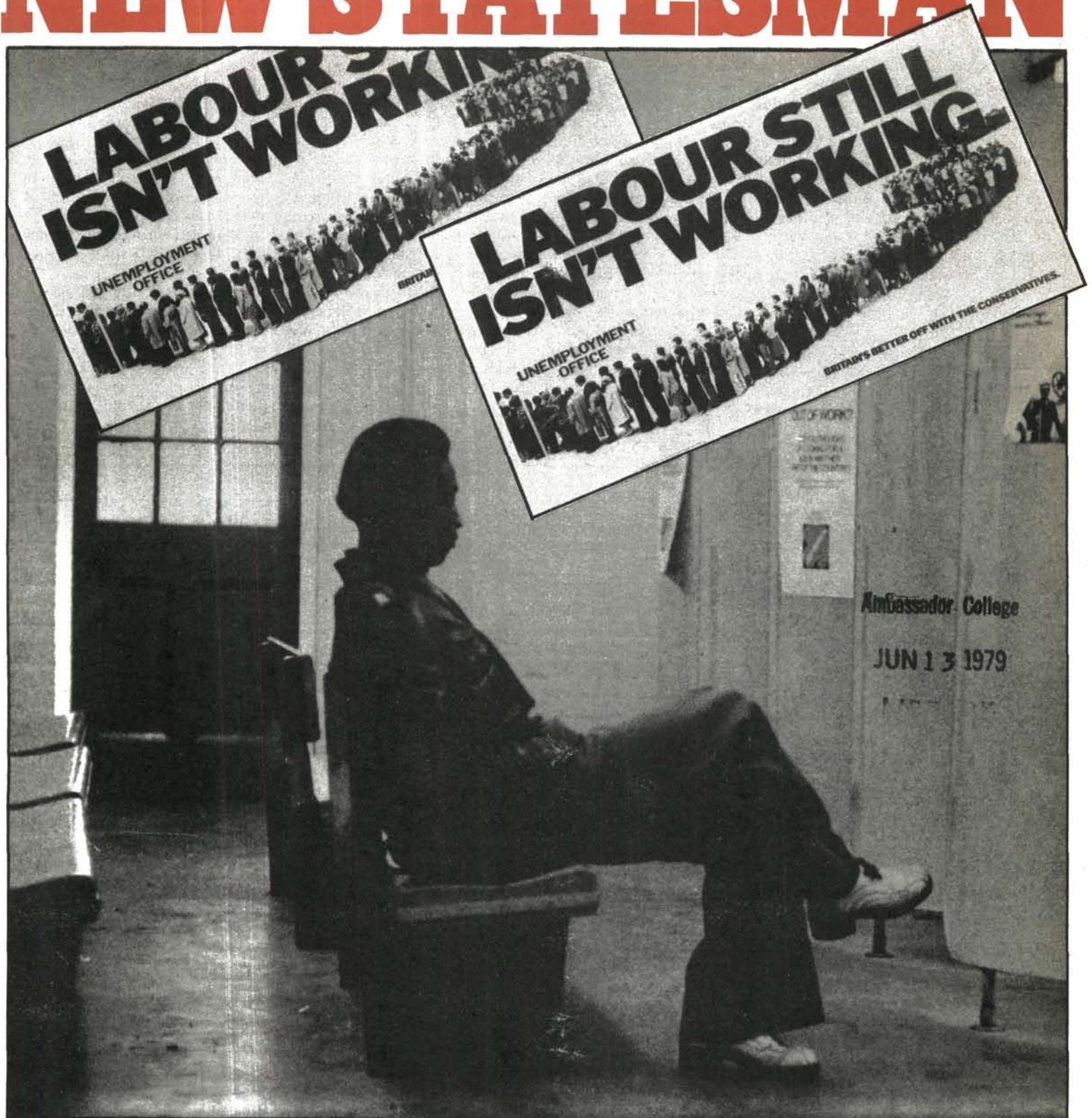


NEW STATESMAN



**You think Labour isn't working?
You haven't seen anything yet**

Race & the election: who gets the NF vote?

Inside Rhodesia: Smith's election

Paul Foot: Fleet Street's war

Alan Ryan: Investigating thalidomide

TANZANIA'S bold support for the overthrow of Idi Amin has shamed the West in more than one way. Despite all the European moralising about the horror of the Amin regime – a regime which our own Tory government welcomed at first because it had removed the obstreperous Milton Obote – Ugandan dissidents received next to no help from the West (and little enough from the East) during their years of exile and persecution. Tanzania had to take a hand at a time when its own economy was already badly stretched, and stretched partly because for thirteen years it has taken the West's promises on Rhodesia at their face value. Just as it spared, and continues to spare, scarce resources for the Patriotic Front, so Tanzania had to call up its men and divert its supplies until Africa was rid of Amin.

It is obviously welcome that this necessary action was carried out by Africans alone, and with such speed and (relative) lack of bloodshed. It is the best news from that part of the world for a considerable time. But the problems may only just be beginning. Uganda's economy has been laid waste, and its society horribly mutilated. Tanzania has said it does not wish to govern the country or install a puppet system. But there may be no alternative to some continued Tanzanian presence, at least in the medium term, if chaos is to be averted.

What about some help for Nyerere?

So far, the West has sat on its hands and made the occasional pious noise about the inviolability of borders. Kenya, main bastion of Western interests in the region, actually called for Tanzanian withdrawal on the grounds that the presence of Libyan forces had internationalised the conflict! This is the kind of hypocrisy which, coupled with Amin's known record, discredits independent Africa. That credit has been restored by Nyerere, largely on his own. To put it bluntly, what can now be done to underwrite his credit with cash? There was always an element of racist condescension in much of the vituperation against Amin in the British press – an unpleasant element drawn from Evelyn Waugh and worse. Now that Africans have once again disproved the colonial stereotype of themselves, it would be nice to see some positive recognition of the fact.

Andrew Young has so far been rather silent on the subject. So, for the matter of that, have Dr Owen, Chancellor Schmidt and President Giscard d'Estaing. All those who have been wheeling and dealing on Rhodesia and Namibia with the white supremacists now have a chance to do something serious for Africa. We have left Tanzania (and Zambia) to bear the heat and burden of the day – for our policies – for too long. The democratic West should signal its intention of paying its share.

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Eddie Milne returns?

Andy McSmith writes: One of the strangest sights to be thrown up in the election campaign so far was that of Tony Benn at a Labour campaign meeting in Blyth, the North-Eastern seat which John Ryman holds by the smallest majority of any Labour MP in the country. In a constituency which Eddie Milne held for Labour from 1960 to 1974, with majorities of 25,000 or more, the Labour Party is worried – not by the Tories, but by the very real possibility that Milne may get back again as an independent Labour candidate.

The loss of the Labour nomination in 1974 also cost Milne his sponsorship from his old employers, USDAW, and his pension rights, and threw him out of work at the age of 59 – all for the offence of running a long and lonely campaign against corruption in the North East. The eventual trial and conviction of his greatest political enemy, Andy Cunningham (whose GMWU pension has remained intact) has done nothing to mend Milne's quarrel with the Labour Party, but what the Labour Party failed to do was to knock him out of politics altogether.

An independent Labour Party formed round Milne now has a formidable track record for winning elections in Blyth. It took 17 out of 48 seats on Blyth Council in 1976, reducing the Labour Party to 23. The Labour group secured its flank by allowing the six Conservatives to choose both Blyth's mayor and deputy mayor. The ILP also has a third of Blyth county council seats. On the parliamentary battlefield, Milne himself beat the Labour candidate Ivor Richard (later Britain's man in the UN) by more than 6,000 votes in February 1974, and lost to John Ryman by only 78 votes in October that year.

Meanwhile, Ryman's parliamentary career got off to a slow start. In the latter half of 1976, he was tried on two charges arising from his election expenses and was acquitted; his agent, however, was convicted on one count, so fuelling suspicions that Labour had won its tiny majority by unfair means.

At a time when the government's own majority was precarious, Ryman obtained leave of absence from the whips for all but crucial votes, to give him time to prepare his defence. He defied a three line whip in 1978 in order to watch Blyth Spartans play in the FA Cup, and told journalists: 'The government whips can explode as much as they like. Football is more important than politics, and footballers are more amusing than politicians.'

A certain left-wing rhetoric is woven into

Ryman's pronouncements, a gift for every Fleet Street scribe looking for evidence to support the myth of Parliament's 'looney Left'. A Lincoln's Inn barrister, he presumably drew on his experiences as a prosecutor for the Inland Revenue to speak of the 'notorious promiscuity' of the 'rich idle ladies of Belgravia', and of their husbands who keep mistresses on the company payroll. One move which might have been taken seriously from any other quarter was his threat of a Private Member's Bill to nationalise building societies. Estate agents are, by Ryman's assessment, 'thieves and robbers'.

The election will show how much all this has entertained the old mining community of Blyth, now suffering one of the worst unemployment rates in the country. Local opinion was none too impressed by details of how Ryman conducted his last election campaign, as they were revealed at his trial. Basing himself in the plush Gosforth Park Hotel, in a residential area of Newcastle best known for its rugby and its racecourse, he ran up a bill of £459, and told the manager he would distribute £112 tips. He then paid nothing for nearly three months before settling for a round figure of £500.

Milne feels that one of his greatest assets in the election is the man he is running against. 'In 1974 Ryman was a bit of an unknown quantity,' he says. 'Now people know him, and if you know anything about Ryman you'll know why that helps us.'

'A tissue of innuendoes and smears'

Patrick Wintour writes: Two months ago, following the publication of a War on Want booklet last summer, the NEW STATESMAN delivered an attack on the TUC's foreign policy, as secretive, bureaucratic and over-dependent on the Foreign Office. The TUC made no public reply either to the booklet or to the article. Within Congress House, however, there has been consternation and anger.

Perhaps coincidentally, the day the article came out in the NS, Alan Hargreaves, the head of the International Department, produced his long-awaited reply to the booklet, something he had been asked to do four months previously by the International Committee. Marked 'private and confidential', its nine pages precis blandly the general charges contained in the booklet, almost as if the International Committee were not aware of them. There is only one small section where Hargreaves actually comments on War on Want's criticisms. Though he rightly defends the TUC's scholar-

ship work abroad, he wrongly claims the TUC has a good relationship with the Overseas Development Ministry. He appears to misunderstand the Sri Lankan tea workers issue – about which the TUC have been accused of negligence – by referring to the issue of nationalisation of the tea estates; the real issue was whether the tea companies would divert back into Sri Lanka some of the compensation they had received for nationalisation. He makes no defence of ORIT, the Latin American wing of the ICFTU, which has been accused of being instrumental in the coup against Allende. He merely writes: 'the TUC has never by itself financed ORIT or other regional organisations of the ICFTU ... the TUC has generally taken the view that ICFTU regional organisations should be self-supporting and should enjoy a degree of autonomy'.

ORIT is also discussed in the TUC International Committee minutes of the meeting of 5 March which discussed Hargreaves's report. There it is admitted 'there are grounds for legitimate criticism of ORIT ... criticisms have indeed been made and pressed by the representatives of the TUC. But most of the meeting was spent discussing the political motivations of the pamphlet, 'its polemical style and scurrilous tone'. The General Secretary Len Murray said 'the pamphlet was riddled with contradictory allegations in that in some places it was alleged that the TUC did not try to find out how the ICFTU spent its funds and in other places that the TUC did know but deliberately hid the facts from British trade unionists'. They discussed whether to sue the NEW STATESMAN but Murray's 'disposition was to treat this type of attack with contempt'.

In the final, most extraordinary, section of the minutes Len Murray said he 'would not expect any member of the General Council to seek in any way to defend or excuse what was contained in the pamphlet. Events had shown that the office had been right to refuse to have any dealings with the authors of the pamphlet, as indeed had most members of the Committee who had been separately approached. The Committee should dismiss the pamphlet as a tissue of innuendoes and smears; the only alternative would be to dismiss their representatives on the ICFTU executive board on the grounds of corruption and ineptitude'. And there the matter was left.

Fuel for Canadian voters

Charlotte Gray writes: As Canada gears up for a May 22 federal election, both the Liberals and the



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Progressive Conservative Party are employing a surprise campaign tactic: bashing the multinationals. Energy policy has emerged as a sensitive issue, and the two major parties are rushing to explain how they might pressure multi-national oil firms to act in the national interest.

It all started in January when Exxon (né Standard Oil) announced a 25,000 barrel-a-day reduction (about 3 per cent of Canada's annual consumption) in Venezuelan supplies of oil to Imperial Oil, the largest oil company in Canada. The reduction was later cut to about 9,000 barrels, but the Canadian government decided it could do without such high-handed treatment. It asked Imperial to buy directly from Venezuela.

Imperial — 70 per cent owned by Exxon — refused. Company president Jack Armstrong appeared before a Commons Committee and explained that he preferred dealing with the parent company rather than the Venezuelan government because supply was more sure. (He didn't mention that Exxon handles pretty well all the Venezuelan oil export business so there might not have been too much choice.)

The electoral trust begins with the fact that the Trudeau government has a state oil company, Petro-Canada, which was originally intended for exploration and development of those resources a private company might find economically unviable. Petrocan currently handles around 5 per cent of the Canadian oil business. When the growth of government, rather than energy, was a feature issue. Joe Clark's Conservatives pledged to dismantle Petrocan.

Now it's announced that Petrocan will buy oil from Venezuela when Exxon's contract runs out this year. And Trudeau is charging across the country, pointing out what a very useful device Petrocan

is. Clark has been left mumbling. He kicked off his campaign by promising a 'steely demonstration that we are prepared to act' in Canada's interest against the multinationals. But when asked what this meant he couldn't explain.

Exxon, the biggest company in the world, operates on the same scale (1977 sales: \$47.5 billion) as the government of Canada (1979-80 spending: \$52.6 billion).

Behind the Imperial-Petrocan issue lurks another embarrassment for the Conservatives. Oil-rich Alberta, led by Tory premier Peter Lougheed, is keeping a very firm grip on provincial resources and not giving anything away in discussions on interprovincial oil prices and supplies. Trudeau would love a confrontation with Ayatollah Lougheed, in which he can appear as the champion of the rest of the country in the fight for cheap fuel, and Clark can appear as handcuffed by Tory tribal loyalties.

Nuclear Piracy

Claudia Wright writes from Washington: One of the few pieces of good news to come in on President Carter's breakfast tray last Friday was an intelligence report from France, indicating that saboteurs had attacked the French nuclear engineering plant in Seyne-sur-Mer, near Toulon, and blown up key components of a reactor being built for Iraq.

Washington has been eyeing this reactor very uneasily since it started three years ago, largely out of fear that its enriched fuel may be diverted by the Iraqis to the production of nuclear weapons. The President has been particularly frustrated by the French, who have largely regarded his non-proliferation policy as a cynical effort to retain an American corner on the expanding world market in reactor technology and uranium enrichment. A

State Department official, who did not attempt to disguise his satisfaction at the news from Seyne-sur-Mer, confirmed that the US has been pressuring Giscard d'Estaing every three to four months to break the fuel supply contract with Baghdad, and deliver lower grade uranium fuel, unusable for munitions manufacture.

At least one senior French government official and the local village mayor have suggested that the Israelis were responsible. The attack required detailed knowledge of the factory layout, familiarity with the components, and a particular concern for the Iraqi parts — which were to have been shipped to Baghdad within days of the blast.

Iraqi officials will neither confirm nor deny reports of Israeli sabotage. Other Arab observers in Washington say that the Seyne-sur-Mer incident is indicative of an undercurrent of Israeli and American activities designed to subvert opposition to the Sadat-Begin pact, and in particular to aggravate the military and economic problems of the two eastern front protagonists, Syria and Iraq. There has been collaboration between French security personnel and the Israelis before, seen in the arrest and then hasty release of Fatah leader Abu Daoud in Paris in January 1977.

The Israelis have repeatedly complained to both the French and American governments about the Osirak reactor. When Israeli Defence Minister Ezer Weizmann discussed arms purchases with the Pentagon in February and March, he pointedly referred to Iraq as his most dangerous adversary in the Middle East. One of the reasons he claimed to require emergency shipment of long-range F-16 bombers is a new assessment of Iraqi military potential which he handed to the Americans. High on the list was the development of nuclear weapons at the reactor site.

The poll of the puppets

The New Statesman's literary editor David Caute is in Salisbury for the country's 'one-man one-vote' election. He has been travelling with Bishop Muzorewa and Rev. Sithole and he explains why neither campaign will change the reality of white supremacy.

THE TWIN-ENGINED six-seater took off from Charles Prince Airport outside Salisbury and headed towards the Mozambique frontier in the east. The Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, Bishop Abel Muzorewa's rival for the premiership of the emergent 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia', took little notice of the brown, war-devastated Tribal Trust Lands passing beneath us. His attention was fixed on a front-page report of President Amin's flight from Kampala – a valuable ally gone, and the prospect of power slipping from his own grasp.

The white pilot put the plane into a steep descent over the Nyamaropa tribal trust land, as the mountains of Mozambique loomed in front of us. Half-a-dozen times he circled a small valley airstrip in search of the waiting Rhodesian security forces, without whom it would be suicide to land. It was Friday the 13th, and none of us said a word.

Sithole had come to address a rally. There was no rally because there were no people. Two weeks earlier, ZANLA guerrillas owing allegiance to Robert Mugabe had cleared the last of 10,000 villagers from the fertile valley. Fields of maize, cotton and tobacco rotted untended, and the vast confetti of kraal huts rimming the valley basin stood empty.

As he landed, Sithole was greeted by some 50 auxiliaries owing him personal allegiance – young men scooped from the unemployed of the towns, put through a cursory four-week training, and then put into the field. They alone remained in the valley now – they, and the white police manning a heavily fortified frontier post.

Pinned to the wall of the police post were a girlie calendar and a message from ZANLA, written on carton cardboard, addressed to 'Mabinyas', which means 'Boers'. The Reverend Sithole glanced at it and walked out of the mess. 'Smith is a dog down with dogs,' ran the message. 'We want bloodshed to Smiths dogs war not dialogue down with you Smith dogs. ZANLA forces.'

I asked Sithole's lieutenant, co-Minister of Defence Noel Mukono, how and by whom Sithole's auxiliary, 'on-side' guerrillas were supplied and financed. (I didn't ask him whether they spread fear and rape through the land, since the best-established facts are invariably denied in Rhodesia with a mendacity so systematic and ingenious as to achieve the symmetry of an art form.) The black co-Minister had stumbled through a few shy sentences of explanation when a white Special Branch man eased him aside and put me straight. Later the Special Branch man confided to me that if the blacks were only allowed to vote for Ian Smith he would romp home.

TWO HOURS later, as we landed at Mangoch, the Special Branch man turned to Executive Councillor Sithole and co-Minister of



Somebody loves me: Ian Smith meets an American admirer.

Camera Press

Defence Mukono and informed them, with a grin of triumph, that 'we' had that night 'taken out' Joshua Nkomo's headquarters in Lusaka. The two blacks sat stunned and silent as security forces closed in a protective ring round the plane.

The reality of white power in Rhodesia was emphatically confirmed in Sithole's hunched shoulders, and the Israeli-style commando-bravado of the armed whites with their brawny browned legs and abbreviated khaki shorts. The majority of blacks are daily reminded of that reality as white cars are cheerily waved through the road-blocks while they, men, women and children, are pulled from their buses and lorries and subjected to long, humiliating searches. Despite genuine advances towards de-segregation, and despite the smug prattle of the 'internal' political elites competing for power – that all men are now equal in 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia' – the texture of life and labour in 'Rhodesia-Zimbabwe' remains a defiant celebration of white supremacy.

Sithole, of course, has been a political rival of Nkomo's since the early sixties. Yet they shared in common a decade of detention without trial, and only last week Sithole, grasping at Ndebele votes in the west, proposed the ZAPU leader as figurehead president of the new state. It seemed sensible, then, to ask him on the spot what he thought about the attack on Lusaka: about which he had been granted no proper warning, an attack which could easily have cost Nkomo his life.

Sithole hesitated: splendid orator though this marble-eyed politician is, the words remained locked in his throat. 'Well, well . . . it's very difficult for me to react rationally, so to speak . . . but of course it should be understood that the security forces are under orders to act as quickly as possible . . . there is nothing we can do about it, one accepts it.'

Bishop Muzorewa, also not briefed in advance, was less upset, for the UANC* lead-

ership detests Kaunda and will not rest content until Lt.-General Peter Walls' commandos and Hawker Hunters have heaped the ruins of Zambia into the Zambesi. Did Callaghan and Owen hear a muffled cry from the bottom of Africa?

'What difference would it make if we put an African in charge of the armed forces?' asked the Bishop. 'They are citizens of this country, black and white, born and bred.' Maybe. A white policeman who was methodically taking down the name of every villager who asked a question of Sithole in the Zwimba Tribal Trust Land, later confided to me that four years previously he had been serving with the British Army. Then the romance of police work in sunny, English-speaking climates beckoned him: 'It was either Hong Kong, Bermuda or Rhodesia. So here I am.' He smiled, assuming cultural complicity.

MUZOREWA it will be – Sithole's election rallies are attracting derisory crowds. (Whether the hard-faced gunmen in Latin American suits who surround him will take defeat lying down is open to question.) The election itself may be scrupulously conducted, and there is no sign that the Rhodesian Front is attempting to manipulate the outcome either to produce a massive UANC majority (attractive to third world opinion) or a finely balanced split which would give the 28 white members negative control of the 100-member assembly.

The entire white population, including grandfathers up to the age of 60, has been mobilised to bring voters to the polling booths (whose exact location and timing remains a closely guarded secret). Almost every white farmer will ferry his labour force to the booths, although the seven rural election rallies I have attended show varying degrees of apprehension among the peasants that the guerrillas of the Patriotic Front will be able to detect and punish those who failed to boycott

*United African National Congress.

the election.

This fear is naturally the greatest in the heartland of guerrilla power, the Tribal Trust Lands, which account for about 35 per cent of the 2.8 million black voters. On several occasions journalists attempting to travel by dirt track to UANC or Sithole rallies in remote areas have been warned by the security forces to turn back.

The Bishop travelled from one protected village to another in Chiweshe TTL, encased in a vast 'Star Wars' armoured albatross. The crowds who listened to his empty, programme-less mockery of his opponents' voting symbols – Sithole's lighted torch is lampooned as an ice cream cone, Chirau is likened to his emblematic elephant, and so on – displayed the helpless apathy of people who were long ago driven from their homes and land to be packed into regimented keeps.

None of these parties has any platform except power. 'We started the war, only we can end it', says Sithole (who did admit to me, in the silent, empty valley of Nyamaropa: 'The

argument, which is very logical and correct, on the part of the guerrillas, is, we cannot hand in our weapons before there is an established black government. And I accept that.') The UANC vote-getting strategem, no doubt influenced by the party's dynamic Indian election director, Ayoub Kara, is 'we are the winners, vote for a winner'. The pressing needs of a population beset by malnutrition, homelessness, unemployment and illiteracy are touched on only in the most cursory manner.

I heard the veteran UANC nationalist, George Nyandoro, canvassing the labour force on a white-owned, tobacco-grading station at Bromley. He told them that, when it came to raising their pitiful wage of £25 a month, the government would arbitrate between their representatives and those of the Rhodesian national farmers' union. I later asked him who the representative of the agricultural workers would be under majority rule – a union perhaps? The question didn't interest him much. 'We must do nothing to

upset the white farmers,' he said.

Sithole told me, 'Deliberately we have not publicised our specific programme. But we have got it. It will be announced as soon as we get to power.'

A free election? The parties of the Patriotic Front remain banned and more than a hundred ZAPU supporters were scooped into detention last week. Only the whites were asked whether they approved the internal agreement of 3 March 1978 and the subsequent constitution, which guarantees to 4 per cent of the population 28 per cent of ministerial posts. More important, the entrenched clauses of the constitution virtually ensure continuing white control of the army, the police and the judiciary. The hanging judges of the post-UDI era have nothing to fear, not even the prohibition of political executions. So long as his main enemy is the Patriotic Front, the Bishop must perch on the lap of Ian Smith. And Zimbabwe-Rhodesia will continue to be a happy hunting-ground for mercenaries looking for a season's sport.

Election '79



Wooing the black electorate

Support for Labour among the ethnic minorities is weakening, as black and Asian communities begin to develop a sense of their own, separate electoral power. This is yet another aspect of the declining loyalty to Labour of the working class, analysed in the NEW STATESMAN two weeks ago (6 April). MIKE PHILLIPS reports on the changing character of the 'ethnic vote'.

OF ALL THE politicians fighting seats for the three major parties, there must be few with such slim prospects as the handful of black and Asian candidates. Russell Profitt, a deputy headmaster in South London, stands for Labour in Westminster; Major Saroop, an ex-Indian army officer and business executive, stands for the Conservatives in Greenwich; Farruq Saleem, a Glasgow restaurateur and printing company owner, also stands for the Conservatives in Glasgow Central; and Gus Williams, a Birmingham building surveyor, fights Nuneaton for the Liberals. All of these are already local government councillors, but all are bound to lose.

However, their progress is viewed with intense interest and speculation within the West Indian and Asian communities; and their entrance on to the political scene is part of a debate about the existence and nature of what politicians and pollsters are beginning to describe as the 'ethnic vote'.

There is, at this stage of the game, a hint of perversity in questioning the ethnic vote. After the 1974 election the then Community Relations Commission produced a study of the participation of ethnic minorities, which listed 59 constituencies where the majorities were smaller than the number of New Commonwealth residents, suggesting that black and Asian votes could affect the outcome of future elections by swinging certain marginal seats. Recently these conclusions have been challenged on several grounds: that there is no evidence of ethnic minorities all voting the same way on particular issues, or of their occupying a strategic position in the marginals; that the numbers might have been miscalculated; and that the ethnic vote might be neutralised by the votes of other groups or by a white racist backlash.

However, the control of parliament in recent years has hinged on one seat, or on less



than a thousand votes in the marginals, and a much sounder guide to the significance of the ethnic vote may well be the seriousness with which the politicians have begun to treat it in the last few years. As Husbands and England suggest (p.543) there are a number of Labour candidates in marginal seats whose only real hope of election lies with preserving the support of the Asian community.

The Labour party manifesto makes a specific commitment to repealing the 1824 Vagrancy Act. This is the 'sus' law which is seen by the West Indian community as providing the police with an excuse for harassing young blacks. The Liberals promise to honour the right of dependants to enter the country. The Tories, after a long list of immigrant-bashing proposals, insert a grudging footnote about improving language training, and so on. In fact the Tory manifesto, like Margaret Thatcher's speeches, is probably not a fair indication of the sheer assiduousness with which the Conservatives have been wooing the ethnic vote in the urban marginals. During the last two years or so, the large and earnest figure of Mr Whitelaw has almost been a fixture at meetings and dinners of Asian businessmen up and down the country, promoting the Conservative attachment to small businesses; and the Wolverhampton incumbent Keith Speed has, during the same period, been rivalling his boss in his attention to similar organisations and issues. It's no accident that both candidates for the Conservatives are identified with small businesses; their candidacy reflects the growing involvement of at least one element of the Asian community with the Conservative cause.

At another level the formation of the Anglo-West Indian and Anglo-Asian Conservative Societies has given the Tories a foothold from which to preach their message within the immigrant communities. At yet another level, they've been expending some effort on propaganda coups, such as the *Express* poll, conducted by an Asian JP 'and freelance journalist' in Birmingham, who found that immigrants were in favour of immigration control, disillusioned with the Labour party and inclined towards voting Conservative in larger numbers than they had ever been before.

THE PARTIES' CONCERN with the ethnic vote has arisen not so much from scholarly analyses of the last election or from *Express* opinion polls, but from the fact that during the last five years or so, blacks have been becoming more and more interested in the political process as an instrument of change. There are now more than two dozen black and Asian local government councillors in London alone, and they are all concentrated in the areas where the ethnic vote has its greatest strength. The issues around which most of them focus their attention are those which affect black constituents most – 'sus', equality of opportunity in housing and employment, and immigration. Both 'sus' and immigration may well provide an index of how far the ethnic minorities will vote on 'ethnic' issues. Certainly these are the two topics over which the so far solid support of black voters for Labour is beginning to break down.

Up to now Labour has been fairly complacent about its support among immigrant voters. The Tories, after all, were the party of Enoch Powell and the white backlash. Since '74 however, Labour's record on immigration, particularly the treatment of immigrants at the borders, hasn't given blacks much pleasure. It is Labour, also, which has presided over the 'sus' laws which young blacks suffer from and hate; over the unsympathetic treatment of blacks and Asians within a range of facilities from education to housing; and over the relative failure of the police to quash racist attacks on Asians. The resulting disillusionment has given some sections of the immigrant communities a rationale for moving

towards the Conservatives on the ground that 'they're all the same anyway'. Another section of the community may well, for the same reason, abstain or vote for the fringe parties. The West Indian papers *West Indian World* and the *Afro Caribbean Post* have decided not to support Labour for reasons of this kind, while major Asian-language papers are much more qualified in their support for Labour than they ever have been. In the past, most of them have been passionately committed against the Tories. In the election of February 1974, the wife of Nick Scott (now Tory MP for Kensington and Chelsea) wrote to the *World* asking them to back him in his campaign for a seat in Paddington – on the basis of his good record on race relations. The paper published the letter and indignantly rejected the idea that it might back a Tory candidate for any reason whatsoever. This time around, they've abandoned their previous warts-and-all support for Labour.

THIS UNCERTAINTY signals a determination by the black and Asian communities to try to exploit their votes on the basis of their own interest rather than maintaining the assumption that they could rely on one party or the other. It's a straw in the wind which Gus Williams, the black Liberal candidate in Nuneaton, sees as a guarantee of his future chances: 'I'm astonished at the interest they're taking in me now around Handsworth and throughout the Midlands. I fought Sparkbrook in '74 and I thought I wasn't ready for a black inner city area. But if I'd been able to predict that they'd be saying to me in Hand-

sworth "why don't we have a black candidate here?" I'd be fighting Handsworth now'.

Blacks' and Asians' new desire for direct involvement with the political process and their new sense of the value of their votes, already tested in local elections, will make it much harder than Labour politicians now imagine to hold on to the ethnic electorate. The local government councillors drawn from the ethnic minorities in London have been meeting for more than a year in an all-party forum called the Ethnic Minorities Councillors' Caucus. They are presently circulating a list of 'ethnic' issues, urging black voters to challenge their candidates with them – and their lead is being followed by a number of other black organisations. The 16 points range from British policy in Southern Africa to the treatment of black people by immigration officers. Candidates will be challenged on whether they support the abolition of the 1824 Vagrancy Act; aid to guerrilla movements in Zimbabwe and Azania; day centres for black and Asian old people; allowances and rapid reunions for split families, equal opportunity in employment, the monitoring of employment practices; racially fair immigration laws and procedures; aid to black self-help groups, and so on. The electoral results may be insignificant in numerical terms this time, but the emergence of 'black' issues as distinct from concern about the National Front or racist violence is an indication, like the existence of the black candidates, that a new electoral element is coming into being and will have to be taken seriously in the life of the next parliament.

Election '79



Will Thatcher lose the racist vote?

The Tories look like losing more votes than Labour to the National Front, if racial tension grows. CHRISTOPHER T. HUSBANDS and JUDE ENGLAND present the findings of their unique study of the National Front vote.

ACCORDING TO conventional psephological wisdom, the National Front vote comes mainly from former or potential Labour voters who are disgruntled with the supposed racial liberalism of their party. If that is true, then most electoral interventions by Front candidates are likely to harm Labour more than the Conservatives, and to harm them most of all in Labour-held marginal seats in metropolitan areas of England.

During the past year we have been studying the characteristics and attitudes of white voters in parts of England where the National Front vote is relatively strong – and our findings contradict these assumptions.

Our research is based on a survey carried out by MORI and NOP in July and early August 1978, in nine areas chosen to provide as broad a coverage as possible of places where the National Front vote has been concentrated. The questionnaire included, among many other items, conventional polling questions about how people intended, or were inclined, to vote in a general election if one were held 'tomorrow'. Those who were undecided, or refused to answer, were asked which party they were most inclined to support. And in addition, the survey went to considerable lengths to discover how people had voted in the general election of October 1974 and in

local elections in 1976, 1977 and 1978. From their answers, we were able to trace pathways of change, from voting behaviour in 1974 to voting intention or inclination in the summer of last year.

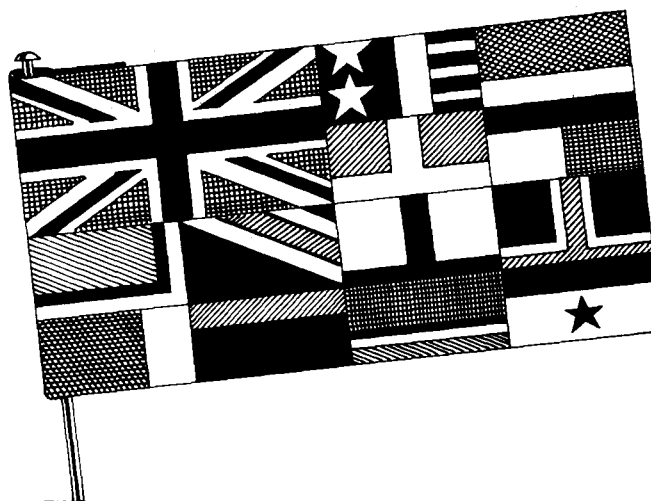
Even though our survey was conducted at a time when 'normal' voting was expected and when a general election was widely anticipated in the autumn, the results showed a swing to the Conservatives of 7.2 per cent. It must be remembered that our sample consisted of urban white electors. During the same period, Gallup Polls, conducted nation-wide, showed an average Labour lead of one per cent and a swing of only 1.2 per cent to the Conservatives since the October '74 election. The contrast provides further evidence for the now well-known phenomenon of the erosion of the white Labour vote in electorally crucial inner-city areas.

In our survey, Labour-to-Conservative conversions outnumbered their opposite by a ratio of more than four to one. Even in these sorts of constituency, where past Liberal voting is less likely to have arisen from disgruntled Tories, the Conservatives benefit from defecting Liberals three times as much as does Labour. Moreover, one aspect of the stereotype of the NF vote is confirmed: hardcore ('normal') NF voters, who said they

intended, or were inclined to vote for the Front in a general election, even though it was not doing particularly well at the time of the survey, were four times as likely to have voted Labour rather than Conservative in October '74. However, it would be a mistake to let the matter rest there.

IN ADDITION TO the 'normal' NF voters, there are others who could, perhaps, be detached from the major parties to the NF in racially sensitive electoral circumstances or by a racially oriented campaign. We therefore classified those respondents who nominally supported the major parties, according to the degree of their detachability to the NF. Those regarded as most detachable (many of whom may well vote for the Front in this general election) were the ones who claimed they would vote Labour or Conservative, but who admitted that in the future they might well vote for the National Front. We also counted as detachable those who had voted for the Front in one or more past elections (even if they did not admit to being likely to do so in the future); and those who agreed strongly with one or more of several pro-NF statements, or who placed the NF at the extreme positive end of the rating scale.

As the table shows, more than 20 per cent



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But if we hadn't had a multinational flag to wave, that project wouldn't have been worth a pin.

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Who would lose votes to the National Front?							Swing from October 1974 to July/August 1978				
		Voting intention or inclination in next election									
		Tory	Labour	Liberal	NF	Other, would not vote		Tory	Labour	Liberal	NF
Vote at general election, October 1974	Tory	23.1 20.2	1.2 7.7	0.3	0.4	0.7	% of those voting in '74	32.2	59.6	5.2	2.0
	Labour	5.0 18.5	36.2 10.6	1.0	1.5	2.4	% of those likely to vote in general election	39.5	51.5	4.6	4.4
	Liberal	1.4 6.6	0.5 0.0	1.9	0.0	0.3					
	NF	0.1 100	0.2 100	0.0	1.1	0.2					
	Other, did not vote	5.1 14.5	7.3 15.4	0.8	0.9	8.3					
Percentage detachable to NF		18.8	11.5								

FIGURES are based on the research of Christopher T. Husbards and Jude England of the London School of Economics; the Social Science Research Council provided the funds. Their survey was conducted among the white electorates of the following parliamentary constituencies: Deptford, Edmonton and Hackney South and Shoreditch (all in London); and Blackburn, Bradford North, Eton and Slough, Leicester East, Melton (Leicestershire) and Wolverhampton South East.

KEY: All figures are percentages. In the left-hand table, the figures in the undivided cells and above the diagonal in the divided cells are percentages of the total weighted sample (N=1072). The figures in the shaded sections below the diagonals are the percentage of those represented above the diagonal who may be classified as detachable to the National Front. Thus, the top left-hand cell represents 248 cases of consistent Tories (23.1 per cent of 1072); of those, 50 (20.2 per cent of 248) are detachable to the Front.

The right-hand table shows the swing among the white electorates of the nine surveyed constituencies, from voting behaviour in the general election of October 1974, to voting intention or inclination in July and early August 1978, when the survey was conducted.

of consistent Conservatives and nearly the same proportion of Labour-to-Conservative conversions are considered detachable to the National Front. Only among those entering the electorate, who did not vote or were too young to do so in 1974, does Labour's proportion of detachable voters as a percentage of its total support in the category exceed that of the Conservatives. In all, 18.8 per cent of Conservative support among these respondents is detachable to the NF (9.9 per cent highly so); while only 11.5 per cent of Labour's is similarly definable (6.4 per cent highly so).

There are a number of interesting implications. If Mrs Thatcher were to try during the present campaign to repeat her racially oriented appeal of early 1978, when she made an explicit attempt to entice NF supporters to vote Conservative, she would probably do herself more harm than good. Given the NF's superior ability to be seen by the mass electorate as a racially oriented party, the likely effect of such a campaign would be to drive many consistent Conservatives and Labour-to-Conservative conversions to vote for the National Front, especially in the case of those in the latter grouping who are moving into the Conservative column after flirtation with the Front in local elections since 1974. The overt race-card, when played by one of the major parties, is clearly a juggernaut with an unpredictable and uncontrollable course. Even from the vulgar standpoint, it is not an electoral strategy that either of them can safely employ.

If all those who have been classed as detachable did actually vote for the National Front, the Conservatives would of course lose more substantially. But Labour losses would be far from insignificant. The pro-Conservative swing since 1974, shown in the table, would decline only marginally, to 6.5 per cent, if full detachment to the NF were to occur. Moreover, there are circumstances, albeit exceptional ones, where more of the Labour than the Conservative vote would apparently defect if detachment to the Front were encouraged. According to our data from the constituency of Edmonton, Labour should

hold the seat with a reduced majority if the NF vote there remains at a low level.

Labour chances look less hopeful in at least three other Labour-held constituencies included in the survey (although the smaller numbers of cases involved do entail a higher probability of error in the constituency-level inferences). Ben Ford in Bradford North would lose to a 9.3 per cent swing to the Tories; Joan Lestor in Eton and Slough (where there have been numerous Conservative gains in local elections in the past three years) is vulnerable to an 8.3 per cent swing against her, and Tom Bradley in Leicester East could lose to one of only 4.2 per cent. Our data show pro-Tory swings since 1974 of 14.0, 11.3 and 8.6 per cent respectively. It has to be remembered that our figures apply to the white electorate only. The total swing would normally be less because of the presence of a non-white electorate – and the three constituencies concerned all have substantial Asian populations.

IF THE ASIAN population remains a constant proportion of the voting electorate between the two elections and as a whole does not swing in favour of one or other party (as we have reason to believe will be the case), then the total swing can be calculated by means of the following formula, in which 'A' represents the percentage of Asians in the electorate:

$$\text{Total percentage swing} = \text{Percentage swing in white electorate} \left(1 - \frac{A}{100} \right)$$

When the swing figures given above are adjusted to take account of the Asian vote, the three seats are still vulnerable. However, in Leicester East, more than 20 per cent of the Conservative vote is detachable to the NF, compared with 10 per cent of the corresponding Labour vote.

Our findings support Mike Phillips's assertion (p541) that the so-called 'ethnic vote' may become crucial in certain marginal contests. It had been argued by others that the ethnic vote, though concentrated, is still too dispersed to have significant overall impact; and that, in any case, it is already so pro-

Labour that there is very little room left for further Labour gains from this grouping. While this may be broadly true, it should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Labour candidates in the position of Tom Bradley, for example, must do everything to maximise their Asian support if they are to retain their seats. Nor need they fear unduly about a disproportionate loss of white Labour votes from pursuing such a strategy.

The most recent reliable figures on Asian and West Indian voting propensity were reported in the research on immigration and race relations commissioned by the *Daily Mail* from NOP and conducted from 3 to 7 February, 1978. Because this survey was conducted within a week of Mrs Thatcher's outburst about 'swamping' on Granada Television's *World in Action* programme, it may exaggerate slightly the pro-Labour propensity of these groups and this small caveat should be borne in mind. The survey showed a higher probable turnout among Asians compared with the national average, though the West Indian figure was lower. Eighty-six per cent of those Asians voting would support Labour, as would 92 per cent of voting West Indians. If these Asian figures are more or less accurate and are uniform from constituency to constituency; and if the total electorate of a particular constituency is composed largely of whites and Asians – then it is possible to calculate the net lead of Labour over Conservative among Asian voters (L_a) in that constituency. Looked at another way, this is the absolute number of votes in the corresponding white electorate which the Labour candidate can afford to lose without forfeiting the seat. In the following formula, 'A' represents the percentage of Asians in the total (voting and non-voting) electorate and 'V' represents the total number of all voters in this particular electorate.

$$L_a = 0.0067 AV$$

In Tom Bradley's case in Leicester East, the net Labour-over-Conservative lead among Asians would be approximately 7,320 votes – not an advantage that ought to be passed up lightly.

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THE ELECTION ON THAMES





Return to the Two Nations

Labour's acquiescence in office has led to a massive increase in unemployment; and poverty for the unemployed and their families. As PETER TOWNSEND explains, it has also allowed the Tories to mouth alternative policies which are as ugly as they are superficial.

CONSPICUOUSLY, THIS ELECTION differs from others of the post-war era, for it is not a contest between major parties both committed to full employment. It is not even a contest between one party which considers full employment crucial, and another which does not. The contest is between a Labour Party which has been responsible in office for horrifying increases in unemployment – scarcely daring to admit to itself the scope of what it has done – and a Tory Party which confronts the whole problem with remarkable insouciance. Asked about the issue at one of her press conferences, Margaret Thatcher suggested that the answers could be found in *Conditions for Fuller Employment*, by Sir Keith Joseph, 'perhaps the deepest study' of its kind to have appeared so far. This is a 20-page pamphlet, in which Sir Keith concludes, after some perfunctory figure-juggling, that 'the national gap between job-seekers and job vacancies is not huge.'

The proportion of the work-force unemployed is *two and-a-half* times what it was in 1968, and nearly *four* times what it was in 1948. The present unemployment level of 1.4 million is, on several respectable estimates, only a foretaste of what is to come. Both the latest OECD review, and the present government's own White Paper, predict increases of British unemployment during 1980. The Cambridge Economic Policy Group predicts that there may be 2.7 million unemployed by 1985, and 3.7 million by 1990: in recent years their gloomy outlook has been largely justified.

To this broad picture must be added some highly alarming details – such as that the figures for March would have been higher by 180,000 but for the special employment and training measures which have been introduced (Hansard, 4 April). And worse still, the numbers of the long-term unemployed continue to increase remorselessly. At last count, there were 335,000 people who had been out of work for a year or more, and 54,000 of them were under 25. (According to Sir Keith, 'the young... are no longer seen as labour that is versatile and good value for money... partly because employers must now pay the full rate at 18, including full national insurance contribution...') Nothing wrong there that a bit of major exploitation wouldn't put right.)

Neither party has anything concrete to offer by way of programmes to reverse the decline in British employment. The real difference is simply that the Tories – enveloped in comforting mythology about social-security 'scroungers', and in propaganda which attacks the victims, rather than the causes, of unemployment – offer the electorate a chance to declare that the condition is politically acceptable. The choice is one that needs to be spelt out: but official Labour spokesmen who attempt to do so are in the position of the licentious preacher busily condemning sin. The matter can, however, be stated fairly bluntly: since 1968 the rise in unemployment, and the fall in the incomes of the unemployed, have been



Job creation scheme

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such that Britain is on the verge of creating a large, embittered and permanently impoverished underclass – a separate nation.

TORY ASSUMPTIONS about voluntary unemployment do not bear much examination. The gap between the number of unfilled vacancies and the numbers of unemployed has been rising steadily. February's figures from the Department of Employment show vacancies running at 231,000 for the United Kingdom: a ratio of 1 to 6 against total unemployment of 1,452,000. For particular occupations, this may be much worse: something like 1 to 40 in the case of labourers, for example. And, because of intense regional decay in old industrial areas, the vacancies and the unemployed tend to be in very different parts of the country – a good many of them, as in catering, being offered at poverty wages.

Considered in the abstract, such figures make the idea of 'voluntary unemployment' perverse indeed. And first-hand studies conducted among unemployed people by scholars such as Daniel, Marsden, Hill, Sinfield and others (most recently, *In and Out of Work*, by North Tyneside CDP) make the message unmistakable. Few who read this literature can doubt the misery, stress and deprivation which loss of employment represents. Sir Keith Joseph's contention that rising unemployment, especially among the young, occurs 'partly because self-discipline, numeracy and literacy have deteriorated' needs to be read against a Tory determination to cut public spending – can education escape? – and concentrate educational opportunity among the already-favoured elite.

What is lost is not just productive labour: individual *lives* are wasted. The work of Har-

vey Brenner in the United States has shown links between rising unemployment and premature mortality, and there is every reason to think that follow-up research in Britain will uncover similar trends.

Early death, after all, is a natural corollary of poverty. But the election – to a great extent because of the government's own fault – is being conducted on a basis of general misapprehension about the extent of poverty among the unemployed and the supposed overlap between the income spread of the employed and the unemployed. According to the most recent estimates from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS), 84 per cent of people out of work for three months or more live in poverty or on the margin of poverty (up to 10 per cent above the supplementary benefits scales). Among employed people, the figure is four per cent.

The erosion of family-allowance and child tax allowances in the mid-70's made it possible for small numbers of men to have incomes nearly as high, or as high, whether in or out of work. Necessary improvements in child-benefits have reduced what was always a small 'problem' to insignificance. Figures for 1977, pre-dating the child-benefit change, show that married couples with no children, or with one or two children, received in unemployment net disposable incomes *averaging* between two-fifths and one-half of the incomes received by similar couples dependent on wages. Even for couples with four children, the fraction only reached two-thirds.

Ten years ago, the comparative position of the unemployed was indeed less serious. In November 1968 a married couple with children aged three, eight and 12 would have received in supplementary benefits about 28 per cent more than the 'net weekly spending power' of an equivalent couple in work, where the husband was a sole earner on wages as low as 50 per cent of the national average. This resulted, not from cossetting of the unemployed, but from the existence of very depressed wages in parts of the economy. But by November last year (Hansard, April 4) the situation had changed around so as to make the unemployed family 18 per cent worse off than the low-wage family.

Public perceptions – and obviously, the Tory tabloids have something to do with this – have not caught up with the fact that, while in office, Labour has allowed more and more unemployed people to slide into poverty. Because people spend more time out of work, more of them lose any entitlement to earnings-related unemployment benefit and either do not qualify for flat-rate insurance benefit or exhaust their qualification after one year. They then have to go onto the lower rates offered under supplementary benefit. The level of flat-rate benefit has fallen relative to the so-called 'long term' insurance benefits. But unemployment, however long it goes on, does not bring entitlement to the 'long term' rates offered to people who receive supplementary benefit for other reasons, such as

illness. Against this sort of background, it is not too surprising to find the DHSS estimating that in the period between December 1973 and December 1976 there was a threefold increase in the number of people living in poverty, or on its margins, due to unemployment of three months or more on the part of the family's wage-earner: that is, an increase of *one million*, to 1,450,000.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN signs of embarrassment at iniquities like the denial of long-term supplementary benefit rates to the long-term unemployed. And priority time has at long last been found in Cabinet discussions to tinker with the benefit structure. But the proposals which have gained the grudging acceptance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer – and which may be implemented if Labour survives – are only mildly reformist. It is believed that they do give the unemployed rights to long-term supplementary benefit after one year on the 'temporary' rate. This is estimated to cost £30m. a year.

Labour, it seems, is not prepared to oppose unequivocally – even in principle – the unemployment which now stunts and degrades a huge section of the population.

One might have expected sweeping and radical action because of the cost of unemployment. Spending on contributory and non-contributory benefits will probably exceed £1.5 billion in 1978-9. Calculations of the value of lost production are hazardous to make, but present-day unemployment, compared with the mid-sixties, must be trimming production by £5 billion at the very least.

Instead of radical economic reform, there has been a succession of ad-hoc programmes. In 1975 they seemed to be little more than diversionary window-dressing, and the government seemed to be feeling its way. But there is now a very considerable battery of special employment and training programmes – on which many people have become dependent, and which are under fairly direct political threat from the Conservatives. (Mark Carlisle, the shadow spokesman for Education and Science, has promised a freeze of employment programmes while other avenues are explored.)

Including the scheme for temporary compensation for short-time working, which began just this month – and is meant to avoid 55,000 redundancies over the next two years – the various special programmes add up to a cost of about £612 million for 1979-80, and assist perhaps 250,000 people per month. Of course, real expenditure is not much more than half this total, because social-security benefits would otherwise have to be paid to those assisted. The Youth Opportunities Programme (currently covering 65,000 people aged 16 to 18), the Special Temporary Employment Programme (temporary jobs for 10,000 people between 19 and 24, in schemes of 'benefit to the community') and the Temporary Employment Subsidy (helping to maintain employment for 95,000 short-time workers in textiles, clothing and footwear) make up the bulk of Labour's answer to unemployment.

It is a ramshackle structure, marginal to the real problems. And it might be highly vulnerable to the political rhetoric of Sir Keith Joseph and his allies – Joseph argues, without any corroborative detail, that the programme destroys one job for every job that it makes. Furthermore, some early studies have called



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into question the value to individuals and to organisations of schemes which only place them in temporary positions. No doubt some of those assisted have felt stigmatised and insecure. But given the present structure of the economy, the failure to develop such schemes will simply throw each few months several thousand more people into a pit of unemployment which, for many of them, turns out to be bottomless.

CONFRONTED WITH THESE realities, the Tory programme produces only general statements about economic revival which is to derive from tax cuts which will 'restore incentives'. If there is any simple relationship between tax rates and economic vigour it has yet to be found – and massive unemployment is with us *today*. The Tories also wish to remove 'restrictive practices and over-manning', and legislate to reduce the power of the unions. The rate of redundancy is likely to accelerate, and industrial relations become inflamed. Their Manifesto proposes to 'reduce government interference in industry, and particularly that of the National Enterprise Board'. Unemployment as well as sickness benefits are to be taxed as one means of 'restoring the will to work'. The Manifesto continues: 'The rules about the unemployed accepting available jobs will be reinforced, and we shall act more vigorously against fraud and abuse.'

Strikes are too often a weapon of first rather than last resort. One cause is the financial treatment of strikers and their families... We shall ensure that unions bear their fair share of the cost of supporting those of their members who are on strike.

The real effect of schemes such as these would not be to make large immediate savings (benefit to strikers' families cost £3 million in 1978) but to create a climate of guilt, within which the further decline of the system might proceed without interruption. The real problem, of course, is not 'scrounging', but the fact that already there are many families who do not or cannot claim the full means-tested benefits to which they are entitled. A new DHSS local-area study has shown that nearly *one-third* of non-pensioner claimants are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the service offered them at supplementary benefits offices¹, and it is not hard to imagine how the situation could worsen with a thoroughly unsympathetic Tory administration at Westminster.

Employment policies ought to be at the centre of modern politics, but the government cannot bring this about merely by a little campaign rhetoric. In the words of Henry Drucker's new study *Doctrine and Ethos in the*

*Labour Party*² – the work of a professional political scientist and Labour activist:

a Labour government has acted on the Conservative belief that unemployment will only fall after the rate of inflation has been controlled. This change of heart has deprived the party of the right to claim to be the party of equality; and even the mutual interest of the Conservative and Labour leaders in keeping Labour labelled as the party of equality will not long serve to hide the change.

The problem of unemployment has to be recognised as part of the wider problem of balance between economic activity and dependency. To many middle-aged people premature 'retirement' is merely a verbal substitute for 'unemployment', and the tendency of politicians and union leaders to write off the older age groups is condescending, and politically short-sighted. Although the division between 'public' and 'private' expenditure is largely artificial, it continues to be observed by political right and political left – and the pensioning-off of youngish people, if it is allowed, will in practice absorb most of the resources likely to be available for socialist redistribution.

The economic dependency of women, equally, is part of the employment question. Rethinking their claims to equal opportunity with men will involve commitment of resources to the care of children, especially those under five. That must come in part from redesigning taxation, withdrawing the married-man's tax allowance (now worth £6.6 billion a year) and re-allocating the money to those (including mothers) who are responsible for the upbringing of children.

Employment and unemployment form, not two clear-cut estates, but a continuum – ranging from the sheer despair of whole-time uninterrupted worklessness, through various intermediate mixtures of partial and insecure work, to prosperity and copper-bottomed security at the top. The kind of people who become unemployed most frequently are those who are already in the lower levels of this hierarchy, and in modern conditions neither they nor their families have much chance of escaping unaided from their predicament. The problem of unemployment in late-20th century Britain is one of re-thinking the way in which work is organised and defined: it may seem an awesomely difficult prospect, but a return to *laissez-faire* will produce only social desolation, and eventually collapse.

¹ J. Ritchie and P. Wilson, *Social Security Claimants*, OPCS.

² George Allen & Unwin, 1979. £6.50.



Who pays for the cuts?

The Tories say cutting public expenditure won't hurt. They say it can be paid for by rooting out wasteful bureaucracy and 'expensive socialist programmes born of dogma'. CHRISTOPHER HIRD has been looking at the figures and finds they tell a different story.

GRADUALLY, some sort of focus emerges from the haze of Tory statements about cuts in public spending. Sir Geoffrey Howe now declares that he would want spending in 1980-81 to come to the same proportion of the gross domestic product as it did in 1977-78. Making allowance for a little growth in the economy, this means he would have to reduce present spending plans by about £3,000m.

Beyond this, Sir Geoffrey so far declines to go, suggesting that he must first get elected and 'look at the books'. A touching picture is thus conjured up, of a new Tory Chancellor combing through inky ledgers to find ways of saving the nation's pennies – but it is a misleading one. Available government documents, plus a modest degree of research around Whitehall – such as went into our own public-spending chart – should enable Sir Geoffrey to be quite specific if he cares to be.

It's easily seen – as the NS has pointed out before – that well over a third of spending is accounted for by transfer payments, chiefly unemployment pay, pensions and social security. The fact that 30 per cent of government spending goes on wages and salaries may give a little credibility to propositions about savings through 'more efficient administration'. But almost three-quarters of that wages bill is in defence and law-and-order, which the Tories want to expand. The manifesto claims to perceive savings in the NHS bureaucracy is unusually limp, because only six per cent of the health budget goes on administration.

Threats are made about housing, and about aid to industry and employment. Housing expenditure splits roughly between capital investment, and subsidies designed to help with running costs such as interest payments and rents. Tory suggestions that rents might be raised, and council houses sold off, seem to be based on erroneous beliefs that council tenants are well off, and are heavily subsidised. In truth, the average subsidy to a council tenant is only £20 a year more than the average subsidy given, through tax relief, to owner-occupiers. So turning some tenants into owner-occupiers will save the State little, if anything. (Average weekly outgoings on owner-occupied houses are about the same as those on council properties.) And council tenants as a whole are poorer than the population at large – so that increases in council rents would be offset by an increased burden on rent rebates and social security payments. Of course, the Tories may reckon to gain a bit because many such benefits are not fully taken up, especially in an atmosphere thick with 'anti-scrounging' propaganda.

OF AID to industry, one seventh goes to finance international trade, and more than a tenth goes to support research and development – particularly nuclear research, where corporate contributors to Toryism are heavily committed. 'Softer' targets might be the National Enterprise Board, which costs £270 million, and the Scottish and Welsh Develop-

Programme	Overall spending	Capital spending	Transfer payments	All labour costs	Admin. labour cost
Social security	15,361	—	14,370	631 ¹	
Education	8,722	505	406 ²	5,580	1,650
Health	8,233	533	—	4,440	520 ¹
Defence	6,868	2,200	—	3,000 ³	1,107 ⁴
Housing	5,006	2,692	2,261 ⁵	53 ¹	
Trade & Ind.	3,232	—	2,750	420	
Environment ⁶	3,047	496	—	1,700	104 ⁷
Roads & Trans.	2,782	920	552 ⁸	386	
Law & Order	2,092	130	—	1,520	
N. Ireland	2,020	500	900	495	
Overseas aid	1,762	—	1,380 ⁹	120	
Nat. Ind. loans	1,100	1,100	—	—	
Ag., fish & food	845	200	450	89	
Others	1,889 ¹⁰	104	30	730	
Debt. Int., etc.	2,241				
Totals	65,200	9,433	23,459	19,162	

Figures from White Paper, January 1979, and inquiries with government departments. Last column untotaled, because admin. labour costs cannot always be found. NOTES: 1: Total admin. costs. 2: Research grants, arts aid, etc. 3: Includes armed forces' pensions. 4: Civilian employees, MoD. 5: Subsidies to local

authorities, etc., (70%), rent rebates (30%). 6: Major items are water services, refuse, parks & local authority admin. 7: Central admin., Dept. of Environment. 8: Subsidies, mainly British Rail. 9: Includes net contribution of £664 million to EEC. 10: Civil service pensions, tax & rate collections are major items.

ment Agencies, which cost £100 million together. Another £50 million might be taken from the £133 million which is projected for selective aid under Section 8 of the Industry Act: a 10 per cent cut in regional aid investment would save £70 million, and a 15 per cent cut in nationalised-industry borrowing would save £200 million.

All this would have serious, if indirect, effects on employment – especially in the nation's industrial 'periphery'. (But, as the NS has pointed out, the Tories are becoming largely a party of the suburban south-east.) There would be nothing indirect about the effects of an attack on manpower spending.

Short-time working compensation will account for £530 million by 1981. According to the estimates made for 1978-9, spending of £410 million saved about 250,000 jobs. Very roughly, a £200 million cut in manpower expenditure – something of that order would be required to help Sir Geoffrey towards his target – might put another 125,000 workers on the dole.

Of course, there are suggestions that freedom of manoeuvre might be achieved by selling off some of the government's assets. As Paul Foot records elsewhere, enthusiasm for this wheeze has been less than total in the Tory press, and it is not hard to see why. Apart from the nationalised industries the only readily marketable property is the government's holding in British Petroleum, which is worth around £1,500 million. Shareholdings of the sort owned by the NEB are too small to make any impact.

Quite apart from the difficulty selling such a large amount of stock – the last sale of BP shares netted under £600m – the operation is a hard one to repeat. Although parts of the

public sector might be sold off, the only company mentioned in the manifesto is the National Freight Corporation, which has a poor profit record and would not command much of a price. Its inclusion perhaps owes more to a desire to satisfy a highly articulate road lobby than to any shrewd financial scheming. Together, Cable & Wireless and British Airways – which have been less formally mentioned – might be worth £600 million. But C&W's considerable sales success overseas has relied in large part on its ability to claim British Government backing. And the stock market might be rather nervous of BA's genuinely imposing needs for capital investment in new aircraft.

But the Tories have a 'secret weapon', in that City money managers would be considerably keener to lend to a Tory government. This would enable them to borrow right up to the £8.5 million limit set by Labour – while blaming the necessity on the previous government. Together with cuts in manpower spending and industrial aid, and some selective disposal of assets, this might just run to a one-off tax cut of £3 billion – perhaps 12 per cent of total Inland Revenue income.

Such an operation would create considerable immediate unemployment, and it would hardly create sufficient new demand as to rejuvenate the economy. Nor could it be repeated. But its effect might be to consolidate Tory power – after which tax could be relieved by real cuts in government services. As explained by the Tories' newest convert, Professor Alan Day – with a frankness Mrs Thatcher's advisers probably find awkward – this could include cutting pensions, unemployment benefits, social security and occupational pensions in the public sector.



Burying a family policy

What has become of the deep concern, so recently expressed by both parties, to preserve traditional family life, with Dad as breadwinner and mum as childminder? Suddenly, the shouting has given way to an embarrassed silence. In this election campaign, neither Labour nor the Conservatives seem to have any family policy at all. ANNA COOTE reports.

LAST YEAR, when an autumn election was expected, both parties indicated that 'the family' would be a major issue in their campaigns. Anxious not to be outdone by his female opponent ('family man' versus 'wife and mother'), Callaghan launched a special four-page tabloid with Marje Proops on the cover, in which he announced:

The family is the most important unit in our community. That is why for the first time in our country, our government is putting together what amounts to a *national family policy*.

Since then, there has been almost total silence. The Labour manifesto makes passing reference to increased child benefits, but there the party's commitment to the family appears to end. The Tory manifesto has a section headed 'Helping the Family', but this covers an odd mish-mash of ideas – from selling council houses to encouraging the arts, introducing tax credits and increasing the number of private hospital beds – and at no point is it clear how any of them would help the family.

In a sense, the silence is a relief, since the 'family policy' so far expressed by both parties has had worrying implication. Patrick Jenkin set the pace at the Tories' annual conference in October 1977: 'Strains on family life' had given rise to a host of social evils; these included 'the rising tide of juvenile crime, the growth of truancy' and the 'growing dependence on the social services'. The 'strains' in question were due to 'the profound change . . . occasioned by the number of married women who now take a job outside the home'. He proposed tax incentives for families 'where the father works and the mother stays at home' and declared that 'the pressures on young wives to go out to work devalue motherhood itself'.

As we reported last year (NS, 13 October), this philosophy dovetails neatly with the Tories' need to minimise the effects of their economic policy on the dole queue: wives who stay at home tend not to register as unemployed, even if they want to go out to work and cannot find jobs. Jenkin went on to suggest that 'the family' should fill the gaps which would be left in the social services after his party had carried out its proposed cuts in public spending: 'What sort of encouragement do we give to families to look after their elderly relatives?'

LABOUR'S RECORD has been marginally more satisfactory. They have replaced child tax allowance with child benefit (now £4 per child per week, paid in cash to the mother) and that must qualify as the biggest help to the family since the advent of family allowance. The introduction of inflation-linked pensions does Labour real credit too. But as Mervyn King pointed out last week (NS 13 April), their fiscal and welfare policies have left many of the neediest families trapped in poverty.

Callaghan's basic approach to a family policy is scarcely distinguishable from that of Thatcher and Jenkin. In his speech to the Labour Women's Conference last May, he

New Statesman 20 April 1979

spoke of the 'growth of vandalism and hooliganism' and linked this directly with social changes – and in particular with the growing numbers of married women who were going out to work – which have begun to threaten the traditional style of family life. David Owen took up the theme again in August, when he linked the instability of the family with 'a worrying increase in juvenile

delinquency'. Both he and Callaghan infer, like Jenkin, that juvenile crime and other social ills are *caused* by wives going out to work, and propose to solve the problem by reinforcing the domestic role of women. Where Jenkin offers tax incentives to keep women at home, Callaghan seems to be looking for more 'flexitime' and more part-time work (usually the lowest paid and least sec-



WHSMITH

W. H. Smith & Son (Holdings) Limited. Results 1978/79.

	1978/79 £ Million	1977/78 £ Million
Sales	474.1	393.8
Profit before tax	20.2	20.2
Taxation	2.4	8.2
Profit after tax	17.8	12.0
Extraordinary item — loss	0.5	—
Net profit	17.3	12.0
Per 50p share		
Earnings	21.1p	14.1p
Dividends	3.133p	2.1995p
Asset value	102.7p	85.4p

The Chairman, Mr P. W. Bennett, says:

- * The results have been adversely affected by the abnormal disruption of supplies due to industrial unrest particularly of newspapers, periodicals and magazines.
- * We are recommending a larger than usual increase in dividend with Treasury consent. Dividends have been under some form of restraint for 12 out of the past 15 years and have fallen well behind prices and earnings.

For copies of our Annual Report and Accounts, and the Special Report that is given to our staff, please write to the Company Secretary at Strand House, 10 New Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1AD on or after 8th May 1979.



ure), so that women can do their second job – in the home – more efficiently:

We have got to pay much more attention to how industry organises woman's role at work, so that her influence at the centre of the family is not weakened.

NEITHER PARTY has much of a reputation for abandoning policies once they have been recognised as weak or hypocritical: so why the sudden disappearance of 'family policy' from this election campaign? Perhaps the politicians began to fear that it might lose votes.

In February this year a survey conducted by Gallop Poll for *Woman's Own* revealed that 24 per cent of mothers with children under five went out to work and a further 27 per cent would like to work; 52 per cent of mothers with school age children went out to work and a further 20 per cent would like to. Though most of them needed the wages, four

out of five said they would still want to work if all financial pressures were removed.

What the *Woman's Own* survey suggests is that any party wanting to win votes with a family policy would need to commit itself to spending *more* money, not less, on social services – and especially on child care. Only two per cent of working mothers with children under five managed to find places in a local authority day nursery. Two thirds of all women felt that nurseries or nursery schools should be available for children under school age; and almost all thought local authorities should provide play schemes or other forms of care for children during school holidays and after school hours.

The suggestion that juvenile crime and domestic violence are caused by mothers going out to work is clearly ludicrous. Evidence collected by psychologists and

criminologists point to a number of contributory factors, including poor housing, poor schools and the high incidence of depression among working class women who stay at home all day with their children. True, some working wives suffer undue stress which may cause discord at home. But there would be even greater discord, it seems, if women were prevented from working. The *Woman's Own* survey shows that one in six fathers have never looked after their children on their own; one in four have never put their own children to bed; and one in three have never even read to their children. Instead of dogging the Tories' footsteps, Labour would have done better to develop a family policy around the real needs of working parents – which would include not only proper child care provision, but also a fair division of domestic work between women and men.

Election '79



Larry Lamb blunders again

With the Tories ahead in the polls Thatcher's Fleet Street editors need to play it safe. But they cannot resist old-style red-baiting and also feeling a little hurt at the vagueness of the Tory manifesto. The *Sun* continues to miscue. PAUL FOOT reports.

□ EDITORS of newspapers which support the Tory Party are in a bit of a quandary. Margaret Thatcher has issued orders that the boat is not to be rocked: the Tories are ahead in the polls, and expect to stay there if nothing horrible happens. Sweet, soothing clichés therefore are all that can be produced about the Tories. Revivalist frenzy is not required.

The papers have therefore fallen back on traditional red-baiting, some of it reminiscent of vintage years. They were assisted last week by a letter from some right-wing folk who call themselves the Social Democratic Alliance (and pretend to support the Labour Party) naming 43 Labour MPs as 'extremists'. This gave the *Express* a nice front-page headline: LABOUR'S DANGER MEN. It was followed two days later by THE RED FACE OF LABOUR, which took some extracts from Labour's manifesto and compared them with extracts from the Communist Party manifesto (carefully leaving out all the Communist proposals for public ownership). Labour, the *Express* concluded, had gone Communist.

□ 'YOU'LL BE WORSE OFF WITH US' was the astonishing headline with which the *Mail* kicked off its campaign. The 'story' which followed was based on a television interview in which Employment Minister Albert Booth agreed that Labour policy was to hold wage rises below price rises. This has been the declared policy of both major parties for as long as anyone can remember, but David English, editor of the *Mail*, contrived to be shocked. He also wheeled on Stewart Steven, the weary veteran who 'found' Martin Bormann and 'exposed' British Leyland, to write the captions to four pages of photographs showing Labour leaders looking silly. Perhaps English was away that day preparing for his interview of Tuesday 17 April: 'The Editor of the *Daily Mail* talks to the Tory Leader in her only major interview of the campaign.'

Not quite, David. George Gale had a mighty long interview in the previous Thursday's *Express*. The truth is that she will talk to

anyone who will prostrate themselves in the Gale/English manner.

□ WHILE the *Express* and *Mail* can steam along without worrying about their circulation, things aren't so easy for Larry Lamb of the *Sun*, most of whose readers probably vote Labour. Last week I warned Larry against proving his virility by advising his leader *before* she makes a decision. He looked extremely silly when she decided against having a TV debate with Callaghan. Before he had a chance to read the NS, he was at it again.

On Wednesday 11 April his editorial was headed 'Time to Be Bold, Maggie'. He referred to the promise in the Liberal manifesto to cut income tax to 20p in the £ at the lowest rate, and 50p at the highest. This, wrote Larry (who probably pays income tax at the highest rate) was a 'splendid challenge'. 'And we hope', he went on, 'that Margaret Thatcher when she launches her Tory manifesto today

isn't TOO vague about what SHE has in mind.'

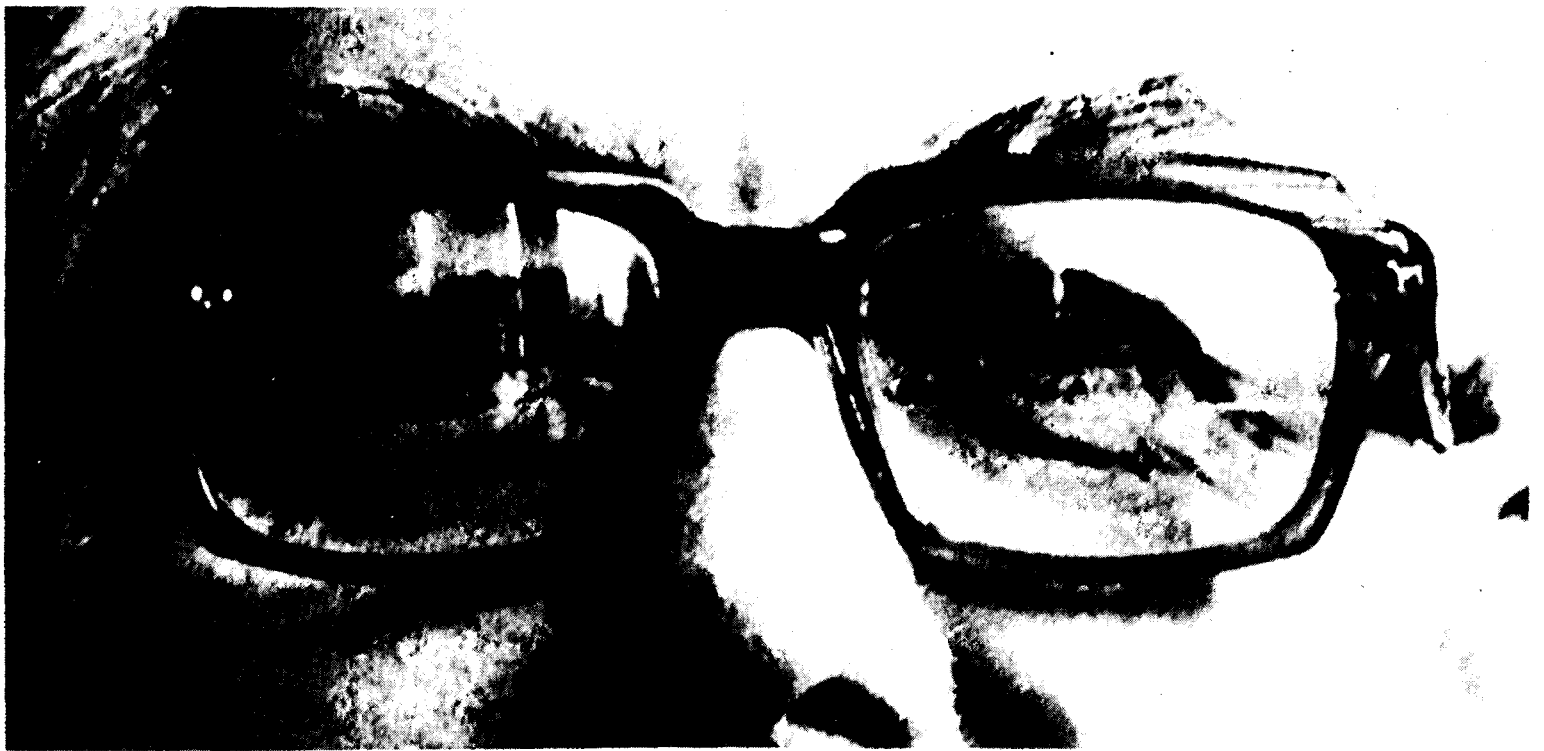
Oh dear. The Tory manifesto didn't give a clue as to how much income tax might be cut. Even the *Star*, which is controlled by Victor Matthews, a hysterical Thatcherite, complained:

Maggie has gone too far. She has ended up with a document which tells us virtually nothing about what she would do if returned to power.

The *Sun*, however, was quick to recover from yet another rebuff. Its leader had only the faintest echo of unease. And it began: 'The *Sun* welcomes the Tories' Election Manifesto with enthusiasm.'

□ WILL THE TORY press (helped by their leader) play the race card, as they did before the Ilford by-election last year? Only, I suspect, in desperation (and perhaps ill-advisedly then: see p.541). But if there is a sudden





In 1984, who'll be watching you?

The Government that's voted into power on May 3rd will still be watching over us in 1984. How will it deal with the issues of the eighties? For a balanced view of the facts about all the parties, and their aims, read Election '79 in The Observer.

Our team of experienced political writers led

by Conor Cruise O'Brien, John Cole, Adam Raphael and Alan Watkins will read between the lines of the party manifestos.

While Anthony Howard keeps a watchful eye on the Press, and Clive James follows the battle on T.V.

Let's hope that what they find will prove George Orwell wrong.

THE OBSERVER



turnaround in the polls, the Great Black Scare will be wheeled out by reflex action. For the moment, there is caution: perhaps someone has told Tory Fleet Street that black people vote, even in marginal seats. Margaret Thatcher may have found out that more than 10 per cent of the voters in her own constituency are black. The *Express*, on the opening day of the campaign, devoted two pages to a poll which claimed to show black people swinging towards the Tories. Why throw that away, unless you have to?

□ I STILL await an answer to my question of last week: which way will the *Observer* and the *Guardian* jump? Both have now printed at least two editorials pointing out that there is a lot to be said for and against both sides. I suspect

they may end up on the fence where they started, with advice to vote Liberal. The *Observer's* serialisation of David Steel's diaries proves how marvellous it is when a government can be stopped by Liberal intervention from doing anything at all. And the *Guardian* leader last Tuesday was a model of political dither and drift. It ended, firm and sharp as a jelly: 'Carter's problem is our problem. We have to involve: we have to explain.'

□ THE JUBILATION which greeted the Tories' manifesto plan to sell-off the recently-nationalised shipbuilding and aircraft industries was not quite unanimous. The *Daily Telegraph* on Saturday published at the bottom of its City page a story entitled: COOL

RESPONSE TO TORY SELL-OFF.

The article quoted Mr S. Sedgewick, managing director of London and Overseas Freighters, which got £14m compensation for the nationalisation of Austin and Pickersgill shipyard, as saying that the Tory policy was 'a mistake'. Almost all the other employers interviewed had grave reservations about buying back bankrupt concerns for which they have been so generously 'compensated'. They want only a few rich pickings from the industries, not the industries themselves. And they want to hang on to their compensation. That is their reaction to Margaret Thatcher's wonderful call in South Wales on Easter Monday, reproduced in the *Express* as: LET ME SET YOU FREE! (A good final line, perhaps, for a blue movie about bondage.)

ADVERTISING Winston Fletcher

Advertisers want to be artists not just salesmen

Advertisers' Oscars

THE ADVERTISING industry is wallowing in its annual orgy of self-glorification. Journalists and movie makers notwithstanding, nobody nearly matches the admen's passionate love for awarding each other gruesome statuettes, and pinning campaign medals on each others' Zest-refreshed chests.

Here is just an armful of the list of glittering prizes on offer: *Campaign* Press Advertising Awards; Designers' and Art Directors' Awards; Creative Circle Honours List; London Television Advertising Awards; International Advertising Film Festival Awards; Rank Cinema Advertising Awards; *Campaign* Radio Awards; *Readers' Digest* 10 Million Club Awards; *International Management* Advertising Awards; Advent Ads of the Month; the Direct Mail Advertising Awards; British Poster Awards; and *Travel Trade News* Advertising Awards (including The Golden Postcard Award, for which next year I shall enter my prize collection from Tangier).

Those are all *creative* honours, which pay tribute to the advertisements themselves. Additionally there are serious, businesslike gongs such as the Thomson Medals for Advertising Research, the Media Circle Awards, the Marketing Award, and the Mackintosh Medal (awarded annually to the flashiest adman in the business).

Within the adbusiness the awards are treated with almost absurd reverence. Last month Margaret Thatcher graced the *Cam-*

paign Press Advertising Awards dinner ('If I am invited back next year, I shall be able to tell you whether or not advertising really works'); following her polite predictable post-prandial paean of praise to advertising a galaxy of guardsmen in full gear mounted the dais. The awards divi-up was then heralded by a riproaring roll of drums and ludicrous fanfare of trumpets, which incidentally inflicted further aural discomfort upon those of the 800 present whose membranes had already been rasped by the less-than-dulcet tones of *la dame de Finchley*.

Maybe the *Campaign* Awards indulged in this embarrassing piece of pompous pageantry in an endeavour to oust the Designers and Art Directors' Awards from their present pole position as the most prestigious prizes in the game. (There is almost as much competition between awards as for them. Soon somebody will sponsor a magnificent *Palme D'Or des Palmes D'Ors*; possibly a dandelion wreath would be more suitable).

The Designers' and Art Directors Awards Dinner was last year attended by Lord Snowdon, who collected a prize for his photography, and by John Cleese who – eschewing fellow comedian Woody Allen's distaste for tinsel trophies – collected two, both for his brilliantly funny Sony radio commercials. Also present at the beanfeast were 1,500 advertising copywriters, artists, designers and chums; a huge throng clearly signifying the

high esteem in which the DADA awards (and beanfeasts) are held by admakers.

Woody Allen, you will remember, explained his boycott of Hollywood Oscars by arguing that it is impossible to vote one film *better* than another. 'Is *Annie Hall* better than *Star Wars*?' he rhetorically asked. It is, of course, a universal difficulty, dogging all forms of artistic comparison. There neither is nor ever will be an eternal measuring rod against which all creative works can be measured.

THE DILEMMA is especially acute for the innumerable advertising award juries, since the prime function of advertisements is neither to amuse nor to look good: it is to sell goods. To return to the movie parallel, Woody Allen pointed out that at the box-office *Star Wars* licked *Annie Hall* into a puny nonentity; but Oscars don't measure box-office. Box-office success is sufficient unto itself. Oscars aim to recognise other kinds of merit.

Likewise with advertising awards. The DADA Awards, founded 17 years ago by the Labour Party's current advertising panjandrum Edward Booth-Clibborn, hold as their stated objective: 'To define and improve the current standards of all forms of graphic design in Britain.' Nowt, you will note, about increased sales or profit.

Indeed over the years awards have very frequently been won by witty, beautifully designed ads that completely failed to shift



goods in the marketplace.

Last year's cautionary example was a 3-page colour ad for *Knitmaster*, the do-it-yourself knitting machines. Created by Collett, Dickenson Pearce and Partners, (the agency which consistently scoops more awards than all the rest put together) it looked glorious and won first prize hands down in the 1978 Campaign Press Advertising competition – only to be castigated a few weeks later by *Knitmaster* themselves, who publicly rated it as one of the least successful ads they had ever run. Shortly afterwards agency CDP and client *Knitmaster* parted company, less than goods friends.

The results, or lack of them, achieved by the *Knitmaster* prizewinner appear to have been atypically measurable. More commonly the effectiveness of a prize campaign – and still more so of each of the individual advertisements within it – cannot be so precisely pinpointed. The most dramatic example of this is the marvellously mysterious Benson and Hedges King Size campaign, far and away the most garlanded advertising in recent history.

The Benson and Hedges advertisements indubitably represent a quantum leap in advertising fashion. Nobody knows what, if anything, they mean; nobody knows what, if anything, they are trying to communicate; nobody knows what if anything, the average housewife in Ashby de la Zouche makes of them; and nobody knows what effect, if any they have had on Benson & Hedges' sales. Collett, Dickenson, Pearce (again), the agency which creates them, has little faith in advertising research.

On the other hand it is known for certain that Benson & Hedges is now top-selling cigarette in the UK (but then its sales have been growing relentlessly, year-by-year, ever since it was launched nearly 20 years ago). Patently the surrealist posters enhance the appearance of the famous B & H Gold Pack, the brand's prime selling feature. Patently each Sphinx-like puzzle picture is clever, glamorous and striking; patently they appeal to the sophisticates of London's adworld.

The Benson & Hedges campaign is unique. Most of the other figurine-festooned commercials and ads are more easily comprehensible and more obviously praiseworthy – though the meaning of the Heineken slogan (another Collett, Dickenson effort) is less than pellucidly obvious; and even the award-winning Smirnoff vodka ads occasionally veer towards the unfathomably zany.

Still, the Clunk-Click campaign, the Smash martians, Sony's press ads, the Kimberley-Clark industrial hygiene advertising and innumerable Clark's Shoe advertisements – multi-gong winners all – are strong, straightforward communications' exercises which don't try to be too clever, but are none-the-less persuasive and have all been (so far as can be ascertained) satisfactorily successful for the advertisers concerned. The single thing they have in common is that they communicate their various messages in unconventional, imaginative ways.

WHICH BRINGS us to the crucial 3p-off question: why do admen's delicate little egos so desperately need to go on so many self-congratulatory trips? Accountants and probation officers and bus conductors and dustmen all manage to graft their way through life without endlessly ringing each other's necks

with festive garlands.

First, because like all traders in ideas, admen are insecure. Insecure because huge contracts (né clients) come and go at the drop of a pentel; and insecure because – despite all the pseudo-scientific testing and shmesting – advertising is still a subjective, nebulous and uncertain business.

Second, it seems likely that admen award themselves trophies because their own likes and dislikes are generally (and inevitably) unlike those of the audiences for whom their ads are produced. While they acknowledge and accept that crude and unattractive ads are frequently wildly successful – look at the Postal Bargain spaces which sell millions of pounds worth of goods each week – they personally prefer to produce ads more congenial to their tastes.

Admirable. Nobody who has a grain of

sense or sensibility is *against* higher standards, better design, wittier slogans, more excellent advertising. The problem is that customers often prefer the *Sun* to the *Guardian*, *Crossroads* to the *South Bank Show* (and *Star Wars* to *Annie Hall*). Housewives, it seems, like *Tide* packs the way they are; and not even the most wonderfully zealous and committed adman can believe the *Tide* pack to be a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

Awards neatly resolve the dilemma. Admen know they must produce what is right for the marketplace. To make themselves happy (and assuage their consciences a bit) they award medals to the work they themselves admire – whether or not it is successful in making the cash registers ring.

Still, the awards in DADA's terms indubitably help to improve the standards of graphic design: and for this relief, much thanks.

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THREE CONSECUTIVE NIGHTS
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After Julius

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with FAITH BROOK JOHN CARSON CYD HAYMAN PETRA MARKHAM PAUL COPLEY

The transmission of the plays corresponds with the action of the story which takes place over one weekend in November 1960



'FRIDAY': Play 1 9.10pm
'SATURDAY': Play 2 9.00pm
'SUNDAY': Play 3 9.00pm

YORKSHIRE TELEVISION
Member of the
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London Diary

□ Long addicted to sitting, if not worse, on gravestones in Highgate Cemetery and elsewhere, I was surprised to learn that the idea of 'consecrated ground' is still acknowledged. Last week my bassoonist friend Neil was checking some facts in the Central Reference Library in Charing Cross. The volumes he was interested in – ten of them, entitled *Enciclopedia della Spettaculo* – were filed on the lowest shelf. A tall person, he sat down on the floor to read them. A worried librarian bustled along and asked him to stand up. Overcoming his objections, she explained 'I'm sorry, Sir, this is consecrated ground.' It turned out that the library, between the Dental Hospital and the National Gallery, had been built on top of an old graveyard. You can walk on the dead, apparently, but to sit on them is a fundamental insult.

□ For the jaded political aficionado, the gentlemanly conflict in West Lewisham between two Oxford graduates offers sufficient ironies to spice the next enervating three weeks.

Noel Picarda Kemp, Conservative candidate for this faded, once genteel constituency, is the younger by five years. Christopher Price, former MP for Lewisham West (and a noted contributor to the NEW STATESMAN) snatched the seat in 1974 from John Gummer, vice-chairman of the Conservative Party, with a majority of 2,402. Gummer had won the seat earlier from James Dickens in 1970, when Kemp acted as his aide.

Apart from sharing an Oxford background – Price was secretary of the Labour Club, and Kemp was treasurer of the Union – they have both been journalists, Price as editor of *New Education* and Kemp as City editor of the *Spectator*.

Ideologically, the two are at odds. Price is an outspoken critic of the police and their methods while Kemp, a member of the Inner Temple, is hawkish on law and order. At a recent meeting of local Tories, he surprised the audience by his reaction to a question about the re-introduction of hanging. 'No', he said, 'hanging is far too emotive an issue to all the progressives in the media. It's just terrorists and child murderers that should be painlessly put down, like Fido.'

From Christopher Price's point of view, Kemp's slightly seedy status as former cabaret artiste and chef at the *Mirabelle* goes down far too well with middle-aged ladies on council housing estates. They love it. But neither Kemp nor Price is malicious in rivalry. As an MP, Price voted against the Employment Opportunities (Small Businesses) Bill, which Kemp had helped to draft. Last Saturday, the two bumped into each in the Sydenham Road shopping precinct. 'We can't go on meeting like this', Kemp said. But they will – and the best of luck to an amusing and civilised fight.

□ It is Bach Year. On Good Friday, television gave us a 250th anniversary performance of St Matthew Passion from Lincoln Cathedral, first performed on Good Friday in 1729, in Leipzig. I had a little cry over it (I've always felt sorry for Pontius Pilate) but was much cheered by the restaurant menu a friend brought back from Memphis, Tennessee. Americans are not so sentimental about these

things. The restaurant is known as *Johann Sebastian Bagel*, and sports the cantor's visage on its menu. Its daily 'lyrical selections' include, at £2.50: 'The Johann Sebastian – our crescendo of sandwiches, bagel, lox, and cream cheese, Bermuda onion and tomato optional.' Other composers are not neglected. At £2.25, there is *Rachmaninoff's Roast Beef*, 'a Sandwich with Rhythm, what a Rip-roaring Sandwich – piled high'; and for only £1.95, there is *Liszt's Chopped Liver Lullaby* ('Luscious and Lyrical, the tastiest chopped liver this side of the Mississippi').

The idea is worth transplanting. How about *Edward Elgar's Enigmatic Tea-Rooms*? It would offer *Purcell's Trumpet Voluntary* (after Jeremiah Clarke) 'a delicious confection of egg on toast'; *Dr Greene's Organ* ('delicately sliced cucumber in soggy sliced bread'); and *Benjamin Britten's Delight* ('native whelks embedded in a light puff pastry'). The evening menu would have to be a little up-market with a bit of French cuisine on the lines of *Bream Julienne*. I think I might be on to something.

□ All is not lost. The hand that rocks the cradle still rules the world. Winston Fletcher, an advertising man, (see P. 552) was speaking to a Woman's Institute meeting in Shropshire recently. Afterwards, he was intrigued to hear that another local branch of the W.I., after the announcement of the forthcoming election, had passed a resolution. It recommended that a telegram be sent off directly to the Prime Minister 'deploring the current state of the nation.' No reply has so far been received, but it is understood, at the highest political levels, that Mr Callaghan is a bit worried about it too.

□ Like Switzerland and all those other small European neutralities accused of having invented nothing but the cuckoo-clock, Sweden stands arraigned for being boring. Hearing, then, to learn that Sweden is the first nation, after the Harrisburg incident, to take a stand on nuclear energy. Mr Olof Petersen, Lecturer in political science at Uppsala University, was in London this week, and confident that Sweden's referendum on the issue will go ahead.

The politics behind the move, he explained, had been long and tortuous. Sweden has had few referendums. In 1922, by a slight majority, the nation declined prohibition of alcohol; in 1955, a larger majority was in favour of left-hand driving, a decision so obviously wrong, in Mr Petersen's opinion, that politicians lost faith in the electorate, and it took them twelve years to implement right-hand driving.

In contrast, this year's referendum on nuclear power promises to be rather more important. Traditional political issues have been replaced by actual concern. The former Prime Minister, Olof Palme, after originally backing the development of Sweden's 13 nuclear plants, has changed his mind and, unusually for a politician, admitted the error of his ways. Previously opposed to the 'small is beautiful' principle, he is now in favour of ecological preservation. After 44 years of remarkably tedious socialism, the move is politically important: at last, after decades of consensus in Sweden, someone has had the courage to reject the *via media* in favour of a principle unrelated to Left-Right machinations. At least it's better than the cuckoo-clock.

□ The Post Office has accepted the suggestion of a Government inquiry and made a marginal shift away from strictly commercial criteria. You'd never have known. The GPO has just been paid enormous sums by Nabisco, Ltd, to include with their quarterly telephone bills advertisements for Hovis Crackers – 17 million of them. 'Obviously there was a charge' said Charles Meyerstein of Nabisco 'but I won't reveal it to you'. Inquiries among direct mail houses reveal an astonishing similarity in their guess of the Post Office charges – £40,000 including the printing. As the Nabisco spokesman said 'this means we can deliver 17 million coupons at a relatively low cost'.

Subscribers are not so happy. The Post Office made enormous profits last year; but who can get through to anyone? Checking this story, I rang the GPO and finally got through at the third attempt. The operator said 'Hang on dear, I can't get through. Would like to try later when they've all gone home?'

Ruth Hall

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

□ Mary Whitehouse, who reckons she is pretty near unshockable, says sickening shivers went up and down her spine when she saw pictures in a magazine of little English girls having sex with grown-ups. 'I closed my eyes and prayed, and tried to shut these terrible perversions out of my mind,' she says. 'But I couldn't. So I wrote to Margaret Thatcher.' – *Sun* (John Allen)

□ A hospital spokesman said: 'The Prince can hardly believe it. He is a very happy father. He is absolutely delighted – and showing it. You would not think he was anyone special, such as a member of the Royal Family. He is beaming.' – *Evening News* (Adela Raeburn)

□ Councillor Jeremy Smith told an environmental health committee meeting that if Gypsies knew help was available, 'it would encourage them to breed', and the thought of that appalled him. – *Manchester Evening News* (D. Thorp)

□ Bridgnorth District Council will not take Vietnamese refugees into council houses, the housing committee agreed on Wednesday. Council chairman Councillor Keith Worthington said: 'We have more than our fair share of a burden fitting in members of the RAF in Shrewsbury.' – *Bridgnorth Journal* (Caitlin Mason)

□ The LSE's indirect investment in South Africa amounts to around £311,000, and its academic board last week decided, by 51 votes to 30, to reject disinvestment on the grounds that the school should not take moral or political decisions. – *Guardian* (Anne Karpf)

□ Two feminists buying a house to raise children in, need sympathetic male help as GLC only mortgage big houses to engaged couples. Man must be under 30, on rising scale of pay (GLC conditions) and around for 6-9 months, preferably emigrating, or becoming unemployed or non-employed, or disappearing without trace after that, and using pseudonym, but anyone considered. £50 reward if necessary. London area. – Ad. in *Wandsworth Pavement* (W. Nelki)

□ Sexually transmitted diseases remain a serious threat to health both in this country and abroad. They are easily avoided, as their name implies. – *Central Office of Information Notice to Travellers* (R. Miller).

Distorting the news

Sir, In your issue of 6 April you published the results of 'research' by Glasgow University's Mass Media Unit showing, or so you claimed, that television news is 'neither balanced nor objective but consistently distorted'. On behalf of the BBC, and, most particularly, the professional journalists of BBC Television News, I refute categorically the imputations drawn by this selective little exercise.

In seeking to establish what is important about the economy or industry, the BBC's journalists do indeed find it natural to ask 'an important person' – a senior civil servant or government minister, for instance – for they are the people whose decisions largely determine the way things will be run in our democracy. It is equally natural to ask senior management and trade union leaders, those responsible for the running of the country's industry. But they are not the only people whose views our journalists reflect, nor do we treat information from official sources 'with the reverence of Moses receiving the tablets'. The briefest contact with these sources, often among the BBC's most bitter critics, would have convinced the media researchers of that.

I agree there may be a national obsession over pay. But your authors are not the first to spot it, and the BBC and ITN are not the right people to blame for it. It is over pay that governments say they will go to the wall, over pay that trade union leaders bring their members out on strike. When Government and Unions have been won over to the economic thinking of the Glasgow University Mass Media Unit, we shall strive to reflect that too, fairly and accurately, on our news coverage.

Most of all, I confess to being somewhat disappointed that a journal with a noble reputation should lend itself to publishing and, even more vehemently, publicising these findings without any qualification. Perhaps it says more about the NEW STATESMAN than the BBC or ITN. I am content to let the public be the judges of our journalistic objectivity, not least between now and election day.

RICHARD FRANCIS

Director of News and Current Affairs

BBC

London W1

Breaking the law centres

Sir, It was good to read Paul Foot expose the hypocrisy of the Lord Chancellor's Department (London Diary, NS 6 April) with regard to the £23,000 underspent on a budget of £335,000. It seems the last place Lord Elwyn Jones would put his money is where his mouth is, and the last place he'd put his mouth is in defence of law centres under attack from Tories.

We in Hillingdon have been fighting a Tory attack on our community law centre since the council changed control last May. On taking power the Tories modified their pre-election position from demanding outright closure to castrating community and educational work and annexing the management committee. The Tories have produced their own constitution, with a management committee consisting of two Tory MPs, one Labour MP (Neville Sandelson), three Tory council representatives, two local law centre representatives, etc, etc, and expect to be appeased at a meeting on 23 April 1979. The reality is that those staff who have not left will 'accept' their second redundancy since July 1978 and leave at the end of April. Even now no new cases are being taken on and existing cases are being referred to 'listed' solicitors. The present community law centre is, to all intents and purposes, already closed.

Throughout this struggle the Lord Chancellor and his staff have distinguished themselves by pressuring the management committee to appease the local Tories, regardless of which of the Lord Chancellor's 'Principles of guidelines for community law centres' are subverted. Indeed, while the Tories have been able to bend the ear of the Lord Chancellor's staff on at least two occasions, representatives of the Labour group in Hillingdon have had their requests

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for meetings denied.

There can be no doubt that the Tories are extremely concerned with community law centres and their potential for helping people to help themselves. They see them as a real threat to the Conservative notion of the 'established order' and the best ally they could have in their attack is an indifferent Labour Lord Chancellor. Twenty-three thousand pounds would have been sufficient to fund Hillingdon community law centre for six months. Accepting there are priorities for finance other than Hillingdon, the full support of the Lord Chancellor could have been worth a whole lot more.

JIM DOEL

Community Law Centre
Hillingdon

Foxy

Sir, in reading recently, and enjoying, David Irving's *The Trail of the Fox*, I have come across a somewhat puzzling passage. In describing the consequences of the battle of Bir Hacheim in which 'part of the Jewish brigade' was taken prisoner (a curious unit identification since the Jewish Brigade was yet to be formed) Mr Irving quotes (p. 190 of the paperback edition) a secret message sent by the German High Command to the Panzer Army. In it the Fuhrer orders that those prisoners

are to be terminated with extreme prejudice. They are to be liquidated mercilessly in combat. Where they are not, they are to be shot afterwards, immediately and forthwith.

Since Mr Irving does not question the source of the order (it is cited in the index under Hitler, directs on prisoner treatment), could it be that Hitler did after all single out Jews for extermination? Or was his policy concerning Jews captured in action an inconsistent outburst independent of his policy on the Jewish Problem in general? Or alternately could it be that it is Mr Irving who is inconsistent?

ALAN KADISH

Wolfson College
Oxford

Unfair for Rhodes Boyson

Sir, Paul Foot's comments on 'these huge London comprehensives' (London Diary, NS 6 April), though presumably not meant as serious thought about education, do show the sort of silly confusion that unfortunately prevents people from seeing what the real issues are in choosing between types of school. He praises huge London comprehensives for their 'aggressive self-confidence and their cosmopolitanism'. He notes the 'Skin colours and hair styles of every conceivable variety' of the cast of *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

Hampstead School deserves credit for putting on a show that Paul Foot enjoyed. But I can't see how Rhodes Boyson's position is affected by the fact that Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd-Webber write good musicals or that kids in London are aggressively self-confident and have different coloured skins and various hair styles. Change the educational system in any way you like and these things would still be true. I have taught in huge London comprehensives, and the kids are lovely. It's wonderful to put on a musical show or a play. Children make you feel good. I have also taught in not-so-huge grammar schools and secondary modern schools, and felt the same pleasure there when we put on a show, because it's the kids who have the vitality and talent, not the system.

M. E. STAFFORD

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The problems of Ethiopia

Sir, May I make a few points on the Eritrean Administrative Region of Ethiopia, concerning the serious inaccuracies that your readers have been fed recently. The comments of Mr Pilger and Miss Dines (NS 30 March) prove nothing but amazing

arrogance and almost total nonsense.

The Eritrean Administrative Region of Ethiopia is now fully under the Ethiopian Government control. With the bandits crushed, my Government now has the opportunity, which it is taking, to deal with the food problems of the region.

The so called Eritrean Movement has never been recognised by anyone except for a few misguided individuals like John Pilger and Miss Mary Dines. I find it strange that 'War on Want', which Miss Dines apparently represents, is the only organisation to fail to discover how effective Ethiopia's present efforts at famine relief have been with this northern region. Miss Dines callously dismisses the 'terrible suffering' referred to by The Rt Hon Judith Hart MP, elsewhere in Ethiopia, making nonsense of her own claim to humanitarian interests.

The problem has been caused by drought in several regions (including the Northern Administrative Region of Ethiopia), by the spread of locusts and by the deliberate destruction of crops and irrigation works by Somali troops and secessionist elements. The Ethiopian Government has made no secret of this, and has appealed to the International Agencies and the International Community for assistance. The response has been heartening. It is only 'War on Want' which has failed to recognise the gravity of the situation. Flip references to 'A Soviet Sponsored Regime', or 'forcing the peasants into the army' when, in fact, they have volunteered in defence of their revolutionary Motherland against aggression, merely displays Miss Dines's well known prejudices and bias. It does no service to your paper's accuracy. I note, with little surprise, that a British Government Minister was also forced to protest.

TESFAYE DEMEKE
First Secretary

Ethiopian Embassy
London SW7

Too too solid geometry

Sir, While one cannot help but agree with the sentiments expressed by Ian McEwan over the rather arbitrary banning of his play *Solid Geometry*, one cannot escape a distinct feeling of *déjà vu* when reading the script (NS 30 March). Obviously the thing is well-written and very cleverly constructed; yet the basic idea of physical manipulation resulting in disappearance has been used, as effectively, before. The story *The Inexperienced Ghost* by H. G. Wells is based on the same premise: though of course there is no sex in Wells. After the arguments over the originality of *The Cement Garden*, is McEwan simply giving us second-hand Wells, with knobs on?

R. S. WELCH

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Ice pick

Sir, When I read Ted Willis's piece about Public Lending Right (NS 6 April) and its footnote, I had an inkling of what it must have been like to be Trotsky.

HUGH JENKINS

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Lese majeste

Sir, Why are the NS literary pages the only ones in the world to render 'Marxism' with a small 'm'?

F. CHATTERJEE

London E3

Correction

In our report 'Lop-sided view of a Leyland dispute' (NS 6 April), we quoted from an interview on ITN with Ray Horrocks, managing director of Austin Morris. The interview was conducted by Michael Green, not Geoffrey Green as stated. We apologise to Geoffrey Green, who works for the BBC.

Certain of the world's famous figures and institutions have got themselves landed in the past with reputations for wit and humour that they can only have half deserved and perhaps did not seek. In the final quarter of the last century, a quip gained enormously if it could be in any way tagged on to Oscar ('Bosie was telling me...'). A decade or so later and the rather more earthy and safer personality of George Robey was alleged to be the source of every music-hall joke, and the smuttier the better, that was then in circulation. In the 1920s the members of the Stock Exchange did nothing all day but sit around, if only in the public's imagination, and invent saucy conundra and ribald tales connected with commercial travellers. Then the focal point shifted across the Atlantic to the generous form of Mae West, no slouch herself as a provider of verbal sexual fun but scarcely responsible, as was claimed, for every marital joke that happened to be going the rounds. Then it was England's and Max Miller's turn. And then back across the seas once more to perhaps the most famous of all these joke depositories, a certain Mrs Dorothy Parker of New York City, frequently but wrongly referred to as Miss Parker (she was *née*, of all unsuitable-sounding surnames for her, Rothschild), whose fame as the provenance of endless cracks lives on to this day, though she has been dead a dozen years.

Starting modestly enough by providing captions for the magazine *Vogue* and producing advertising copy that she must have winced to write ('Brevity is the Soul of Lingerie, as the Petticoat said to the Chemise'), she later revealed her more astringent side. On hearing that the silent and somnolent President Calvin Coolidge was dead, she asked 'How can they tell?', and she named her canary Onan because, as she tastefully explained for those whose knowledge of the Old Testament might be a little rusty, 'he spills his seed upon the ground'.

She was one of the founder members, in 1919, of what was rather a rarefied intellectual lunch club, a daily gathering of ten or so persons, all well known to each other and all, to begin with anyway, friends. They met at a very famous-to-be round table in the restaurant of New York's Algonquin Hotel, an establishment that especially welcomed the theatrical profession and those who lived, however precariously, by the arts. Known in their early and penurious days as 'the greatest collection of unsaleable wit in America', they all swiftly began displaying talents as jumbo-sized as their ambitions. Nobody, as James R. Gaines' *Wit's End* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, £8.40) points out in his fascinating survey of this unique assembly, had a chance at the table who was, in fact, nobody. Pooters were out. 'It was a Bronx Zoo of contemporary neurotics, a group so dazzling in its assortment of idiosyncratic personalities that the wonder is simply that they spoke to each other at all, even in epigrams.' Not a very comfortable gathering you will be telling yourselves, and you will be correct.

Reading from, as it were, left to right, whom do we find there? First and perhaps

foremost there was the squat and 16-stone journalist Alexander Woolcott, the waspish wit whose egomaniac character was clearly shown in *The Man Who Came To Dinner*, who was said never to befriend anybody whose life would not make a good magazine article, and whose birth was regarded as such a family disaster that his Aunt Julie spent the whole day crying in her room 'as being the very least she could do'. At his side sat the said Mrs Parker when not being dried out for alcoholism or recovering from either an abortion or a suicide attempt, her life a desperate and sad jumble of unhappy love affairs. There was Marc Connelly, a successful writer and with *The Green Pastures* still to come. There was Robert Sherwood (*Reunion in Vienna*, *Idiot's Delight*, and many more). There was Harold Ross, who invented *The New Yorker*. There was George Kaufman, a phenomenally prolific and gifted writer and theatrical collaborator (sometimes with Moss Hart), who had no truck with the so-called theatre of ideas and whose advice to playwrights is memorable - 'If you have a message, send it by Western Union.' There was Robert Benchley, a writer with aspirations but who despised himself for developing into a much loved (and well paid) stage and film personality instead. And there was the journalist Franklin P. Adams who sourly observed of those who are for ever looking back through rose-coloured glasses, 'Nothing is more responsible for the good old days than a bad memory.'

And yet, good old days they might still seem to some. The American post-war years up to the Wall Street Crash were described by Scott Fitzgerald as 'the greatest gaudiest spree in history'. Prohibition bothered nobody (people made gin in bathtubs and the rich could get

whisky prescriptions from their doctors). When not actually lunching, the Round Table occupants ('When in doubt, make a wise-crack') lived largely in each other's apartments and houses, joined every so often by Harpo Marx (apt to terrify shy visitors by either picking their pockets or jumping out at them naked from behind a bush). They squabbled and bickered and shouted each other down, full of grudging mutual admiration and all caught up in a great swirl of success. They played croquet in Central Park. They played, on and on, poker. They played bridge (a rather squeaky upstairs bed occupied by a newly-married couple was known as 'the informative double'). They were witty and vain and wildly malicious and almost impossible to live with and collectively pretty odious and nothing that they did or were could be less characteristic of that great nation as a whole.

I have, as regular readers will know, an unbounded admiration and affection for Americans. There is truly nobody like them for sociability and warmth. Their kindnesses and thoughtfulness are endless. And on a higher level, the world seems at last to be allowing itself to display a little gratitude to President Carter, reluctant though other nations may be to have to acknowledge the undoubted fact that here is a people whose actions are so often inspired by a simple goodness. The results of these actions may not always be successful, and over some of them we draw a veil, but at least the intention is there. What other race could one possibly think of as being 'good'? Frogs? *Non*. Germans? *Nein*. Italians? Don't be ridiculous.

I have found Americans to be supreme, too, in tact and aplomb. Staying a few years ago with a charming actress friend, Brenda Forbes and her husband on Martha's Vineyard, a delightful island off the Massachusetts coastline, I was kindly included and swept up in the very vigorous social life of the neighbourhood. It was canapés and cholesterol all over everywhere. I happen to like both clams and Martinis and every day, at this house or that, they loomed large. Setting out one evening at drinks time on yet another spree, Brenda confessed to being a little vague about our destination ('It's a house on a hill with a flagpole') but we located it without difficulty and were warmly welcomed by a smiling hostess, introduced to other guests and handed both clams and Martinis. Conversation flowed. After half an hour or so, Brenda approached our hostess and, lowering her voice as people do when illness is in the air, asked sympathetically after her mother: 'I do hope you've had better news of her.' To which the surprising answer was 'No news very recently, I'm afraid. My mother's been dead these last sixteen years.' Brenda gave a gasp and then a scream of dismay. 'Oh my God, we're at the wrong party.' And again there was an unusual answer from our unscheduled hostess, who said with great charm: 'I did just wonder where you thought you were. And please don't go just yet. You're an unexpected bonus.' So we stayed, and we remingled and eventually we set out and located another house on another hill and with another flagpole and there the welcome was equally warm (no English shrieks of 'We'd quite given you up, where have you been?'). The kind hearted will be wondering whether, in this case, the mother was better and indeed still alive. Yes, she was.

Roger Woddis

Take It As Red

According to Mr Healey, the Tory election manifesto is 'more revolutionary than the Communist Party's'.

Arise, you victims of inflation,
Enslaved and yearning to be free;
We'll go all out to cut taxation
And through the roof with VAT.

You poor, downtrodden speculators,
Preserve, while yet condemning strikes,
The image of a Willie Whitelaw,
The ethics of a William Sykes.

The Devil take the hindmost,
Let living-standards fall,
The fattest to the gravy,
The weakest to the wall.

And all the world will marvel
To see our public face,
With Britain, like the graveyard,
A fine and private place.

BOOKS IN GENERAL

Jon Silkin

Dead Man's Dump

The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg
edited by Ian Parsons *Chatto & Windus*
£12.95

Rosenberg – as Leavis said of Pope – has had bad luck. He was old enough to be of military age when World War I broke out. Needy enough to volunteer – in November 1915 – and too short to serve in the RAMC ('the idea of killing me a bit'), he was destroyed on 1 April 1918. The second world war destroyed the first *Collected Works* (edited by Bottomley and Harding in 1937) in an air raid; and the most tireless propagator of his poetry, his sister Annie Wynick, was killed in a grotesque accident in the early Sixties.

There are other kinds of bad luck. Rosenberg's poetry is complex, powerful, compact. It is misfortune enough to be one of the best poets writing in the earlier part of the century, but, to compound this, he was writing within the purview of three literary simplifications: the then prevailing sub-pastoral mode, the Georgian movement, and the Imagists (not to mention the health-through-aggression brigade), none of which could with profit – either to themselves or to the poet – accommodate Rosenberg. Already isolated from an earlier generation of Jewish immigrants, this 'inhospitality' isolated him from most writers (he was already separated from his generation of the English working-class). And despite the generosity of his affluent middle-class patron, Edward Marsh, it is clear from Rosenberg's letters that Marsh did not appreciate his work. 'For God's Sake! don't say they're obscure', he wrote; and, 'I am enclosing a poem [it was 'Break of Day in the Trenches'] . . . which is surely as simple as ordinary talk'. Brooke remained the centre of Marsh's attention.

'Most people find [my poems] difficult and won't be bothered to read into them,' he wrote to Schiff in June 1915. If one re-applies this to the earlier work the comment is, in a sense, not surprising. For although original phrases, metaphors and images appear in even the earliest poems, it's this same originality which made Rosenberg slow to find his own voice. Zangwill's cousin, Dr Eder, wrote to Rosenberg in 1912: 'You have not so far given utterance to your own personality . . . I think you want the courage to strike out into a line of your own.'

Before 1914, Rosenberg often used a number of other poets' voices to transmit his earlier apprehensions – Blake, Shelley, Rossetti, Donne, Marvell; and the example of Blake, where 'each touch is interpenetrated with sense', offered not only a working vision that appealed to Rosenberg but also one – of energy informed with imagination – that helped to mould him.

The nature of Rosenberg's power may be felt but not, perhaps, easily grasped. In a prose fragment called 'On Modern Art', he wrote: 'Mere representation is unreal, is fragmentary. The bone taken from Adam remains a bone.' In his lecture 'Art', given in

South Africa in 1914, he spoke of trying

to detach a *part* from nature, and *give it the completeness of the whole*, by applying to that part the principle of rhythmic law that is instinctive in our consciousness [my italics].

Rosenberg is, in effect, speaking of that branch of metaphor called metonymy (synecdoche) where the part stands for (and this compresses the effect of) the whole. And in speaking of compaction and power, especially in this figure of grammar, he is describing his own work. The part becomes the rhythmic symbol of the whole referent. This compaction accounts also for his richness and dramatic strength, instances of which can be found in his quite early verse and art.

The years of Rosenberg's evident crucial development (as a poet) are 1914-15. In this period comes 'Subjectivity' (1914) – 'Speak to the all-eyed Soul'. In 1914 he also wrote 'The Female God' and 'On receiving News of the War':

Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould.

And he wrote the Blakean poem 'The Flea'. In these two years he also produced the Donne-like 'God Made Blind', the second of three poems to develop an extremely unorthodox image of God; and two more fine poems, 'Midsummer Frost' and 'None have seen the Lord of the House'. In 'Midsummer Frost' we find the complexity of Rosenberg's later poetry, in this instance achieved by opposites polarised within each other:

A July ghost, aghast at the strange winter,
Wonders, at burning noon, (all summer seeming),
How, like a sad thought buried in light words,
Winter, an alien presence, is ambushed here.

Rosenberg was (comparatively) slow to develop his own voice; this was due, perhaps, to the difficulty of finding precisely the right tone and rhythms to express the richness and complexity of his ideas. 'I am always afraid of being empty,' he wrote to Bottomley in July 1916. At first the ideas peep through as metaphors only, the most frequent of which is the 'root'. But in 'Chagrin' (1915-16) the metaphor-idea can be seen to develop fully into an idea, one that is the hidden preoccupation, not only of this poem, but of much of Rosenberg's later poetry:

We ride, we ride, before the morning
The secret roots of the sun to tread.

These are the life-giving roots, especially necessary to the minority diaspora Jews, but essential, of course, to any community. In *Moses*, the old ideas, associated with slavery, must be pulled up:

Torn up the tight roots
Of some dead universe.

And in 'Break of Day in the Trenches' (1916), characterising the mortality of the human animal, he writes:

Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping.

What Rosenberg was working towards, as we can see from the various versions of the *Amulet/Unicorn* dramas, was a society re-rooted in moral and sensuous health, complex, inclusive, authentically devoted to that beauty which ultimately orders a complex harmony. What supervened was the War.

In order to reach his complex vision, Rosenberg had to regard the society of Europe, absurdly deracinated by war (an extension of State policy by other means), and he was forced to attend to some value-system that accounted for war and its destruction, as society, at the same time, groped tentatively towards some complex, if distant, Peaceable Kingdom. This regard (in both senses) was unflinchingly achieved: 'I am determined', he wrote to Laurence Binyon in Autumn 1916,

that this war, with all its powers for devastation, shall not master my poeting; that is, if I am lucky enough to come through all right. I will not leave a corner of my consciousness covered up, but saturate myself with the strange and extraordinary new conditions of this life, and it will all refine itself into poetry later on.

There are a few painterly 'war poems' like, 'Marching' ('Like flaming pendulums, hands/Swing across khaki'); but the best – 'Break of Day in the Trenches' (1916), and from 1917, 'Returning, We hear the Larks', 'Dead Man's Dump', and 'Daughters of War' – work with extraordinary resolve, not only to unfold the physical horrors and absurdity of war, but also to a view of the destruction of a civilisation's fabric of restraint. This view is the more terrifying for its curious blend of emotional reserve and even-mindedness on the one hand – a kind of stoicism – and, on the other, a physical immediacy often compressed in metaphor and metonymy. Rosenberg does not sacrifice his tenderness, but equally, his mind is neither dissolved by pity, nor made olympian with compassion. A fine instance of such balance is 'Break of Day' with its grinning judgment of the rat delivered upon the absurd humans incarcerated in the trenches, who must, it seems, remain to fight it out:

It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
Less chanced than you for life.

'Dead Man's Dump', which Ian Parsons calls 'deservedly Rosenberg's most renowned poem', is amongst his most sustained work. Unlike Owen's 'Strange Meeting', which is compassion powerfully accumulated in narrative recollection and admonition generated through argument, Rosenberg's longer poem is immediate in its re-creation of the battlefield. His poem comes to us from his being there.

Owen's most known formulation of compassion emerged finally as

I am the enemy you killed, my friend
of which an earlier version read

I was a German conscript, and your friend.

In moving from the specific to the generalised, Owen moved from the more intimate to the universal, but also, as I see it, from the more attentive response of pity to the more olympian one of compassion. In both 'Break of Day' and 'Dead Man's Dump' Rosenberg's response – although not personal as, say, in another war, Alun Lewis's was – remains nevertheless intimate. The view is not synoptic. It takes things in life-size. Moreover, Rosenberg does not generalise through the universal; he is instantial. It is this man, this pain, this evaluation, with which he's concerned, and this instantial response is, as it

were, a function of synecdoche; it is this instance standing for the whole suffering, the universal pain of war. It is the part standing for the whole, and it achieves its power by being singular and compact. Compaction comes also through Rosenberg's contained derangement of language:

And flung on [Earth's] hard back
Is their souls' sack
Emptied of God-ancestral essences.

At first 'souls' sack' seems as if it might be a tersened version of the neo-platonic body/soul complex which Rosenberg would have encountered in Blake and Shelley. But 'God-ancestral essences' suggests the different idea of not the body but the *soul* 'amion' ('sack') emptied by war of those sacred, precious attributes originally nucleated by God. This is the measure of war's destructiveness (see also Owen's 'Exposure') and one finds confirmation of this measure in the concluding stanza as much as in the cross-roads image in the poem.

This new edition is scrupulously presented. Where Ian Parsons disagrees with the editors of the earlier 1937 edition he tells us in what ways he does so. Every comma is picketed and its credentials examined, and the text we are here offered is the sifted result not only of previous editors' decisions but a collation of all the extant holographs and typescripts. I do not think Parsons should have omitted from 'Dead Man's Dump' stanza nine (which he restores in a note) and his aesthetic justifications for doing so seem to me weak. Otherwise his edition is impeccable, even if his introductory formulation of Rosenberg's Jewishness is precarious: 'Of course, he was a Jew . . . [but] No, his vision was cosmic . . . personal and unique rather than specifically Jewish.' I cannot see how being Jewish prevents one from being cosmic, or, for that matter, from being personal. We do not tamper with Wordsworth's Englishness; but neither do we deny him universality. Can one not be Jewish *and* cosmic?

Alan Ryan

Mother's Little Helper

Suffer the Children: The Story of Thalidomide
by THE SUNDAY TIMES INSIGHT TEAM
Deutsch £5.95

When pregnant rats are given thalidomide, a phenomenon known as resorption takes place: some of the embryos in the rat's womb die, and the material of the dead embryos is absorbed back into the rat's body through the wall of the womb. Human embryos are tougher. If they absorb thalidomide during the critical period of their gestation, they suffer terrible damage, but they don't necessarily die of it. One result, with which everyone is distressingly familiar, is 'phocomelia'. The long bones of the arms and legs fail to develop, and the unfortunate child is born with little flippers. Obstetricians are familiar with several sorts of internal damage, such as intestinal lesions, closure of the bowel, and missing kidneys. Even a creature as tough as the human baby usually dies of damage as gross as this, and the expert estimate is that in addition to the 410 babies in this country who survived their birth defects, there were perhaps twice as many who did not. There is still remarkable uncertainty about just how thalidomide produces its catastrophic effects; although most of the children with terrible external deformities are of normal intelligence, many evidently have severe brain damage, and doctors suspect that a good deal of unattributed heart disease, epilepsy and other illness ought to be laid at thalidomide's door.

The experience of the children and their families scarcely bears thinking about. *Suffer the Children* is a rather restrained piece of work; its very considerable impact owes more to the investigative talents of Bruce Page's *Sunday Times* team than to any piling on of horrors. All the same, it is the horrors which quite properly catch one's attention, and, most importantly, which fuelled the *Sunday Times* campaign to get proper compensation for the victims. Even the doctors and nurses

who had to care for the deformed children often found the job beyond them; mothers were sometimes told that they had produced a healthy baby, only to have a limbless bundle thrust on them days later; hospital staff flinched from examining the babies. It's not surprising that many families fell apart under the strain; what is more surprising is how few parents killed either themselves or their offspring. But as one woman said, when she began to take an overdose, 'All the time I thought of her lying helpless with her awful stunted body, and I kept repeating to myself, "Who'd look after her?"'

An added horror was the social isolation of the victims; their doctors were anxious not to say or do anything that would expose them to litigation for negligence, and their friends and relatives were simply overwhelmed. Dr Gerard Vaughan, of Guy's Hospital, who has treated large numbers of thalidomide children, thinks people feel their own health and wholeness to be threatened by such deformity; it seems equally plausible to suppose that such children induce irrational guilt in the rest of us, in the same way as the survivors of concentration camps. We can't see why disaster should strike them rather than us and somehow feel ashamed to be alive and well in their presence. Anyone who has read Marjorie Wallace's story of Terry Wiles – or who saw the television adaptation of *On Giant's Shoulders*, in which Terry Wiles starred as himself – will know, too, that some people displayed extraordinary courage, resourcefulness and devotion in the teeth of all difficulties.

But *Suffer the Children* is only incidentally a moral story at this level; mostly it is a story of careless research, reckless salesmanship, and subsequently of the law's incapacity to cope with this kind of disaster. Harold Evans, who feels not unreasonably bitter about the way he had to fight his way through the English legal system, and eventually to the European

Commission on Human Rights, in order to publish the thalidomide story, suspects that the common view is that it was all a terrible accident for which no-one was to blame, and that the Distillers Company behaved very decently by giving the victims such compensation as money could provide. This, he says, is nonsense in every respect. Thalidomide was discovered by a German firm, Chemie Grünenthal, which was basically a toiletries manufacturer cashing in on the postwar antibiotics boom by making drugs under licence; it had a correspondingly inexperienced research department, and it is not entirely surprising that none of the major drug companies, such as Smith, Kline and French, ever confirmed the results claimed by Grünenthal. These were remarkable; on experimental mice and rats, thalidomide was a sedative with rapid action, no side effects, and apparently no level at which it was fatal. In the mid-1950s, when this research took place, there was a large market for a non-barbiturate sedative; but there was also a large market for general tranquillising drugs – 'mother's little helper' hadn't yet acquired its dubious reputation. Grünenthal went into production and flooded Germany with what was known under the trade name as Contergan; from the very beginning the company got reports of unpleasant side effects, and from the very beginning it either suppressed them, or tried to discredit their authors, or paid for positive reports on the drug. It also started trying to sell the drug to licensees.

The Distillers Company can't be said to have behaved with the recklessness of the other companies; but, they behaved quite carelessly enough to make one more than glad that the company got out of drug manufacturing in 1962. Fundamentally, Distillers wanted to believe the best of thalidomide; so the anxieties of their own researchers about the drug made little impact on the management. Distillers claimed after the birth of deformed children that there were no tests which could have been performed to show up the effect of thalidomide on the foetus. But this ignores, firstly the fact that the damage to the peripheral nervous system of adults was known, and was glossed over, and secondly, the fact that tests which might well have shown its effects were quite commonly made by other companies. In essence, the companies selling thalidomide were too ready to take their ignorance about the effects of the drug on pregnant women as evidence of its safety.

The companies' subsequent behaviour was on much the same level. In Britain, particularly, the parents of deformed children found the law not so much asinine as mulish. Distillers thought that they could defend an action for negligence – since the case never came to trial, it isn't absolutely clear that they couldn't – and a combination of ill-luck with solicitors and the meanness of the legal aid system meant that the parents found it hard to scare them into good behaviour. The American willingness to allow lawyers to proceed on a contingency fee meant that parents in the United States could get competent and aggressive advocacy at no cost to themselves; the English system, which as text books say 'abhors maintenance', is well designed to discourage needless litigation, but only at the cost of discouraging needful litigation too.

The whole affair raises far more questions than it answers, and it is one of the virtues of

the book that it doesn't pretend that it's easy to devise foolproof tests for drugs, or foolproof systems for follow-up research, or universally satisfactory systems of compensation for the sufferers in such cases. The American legal system allows individuals to tackle large corporations, but confines benefits to successful litigants; it also has side-effects in terms of the resulting expense of medicine. Again, the Food and Drug Administration has excellent arrangements for screening drugs before they are put on the market – and no power to keep checking on them thereafter. In this instance, Britain seems to have got the worst of all worlds; successive ministers washed their hands of their problem, with Enoch Powell winning prizes for callousness in this respect, but the legal system offered nothing in place of governmental assistance. Only in Germany were any criminal charges laid, and they were eventually dropped in return for Grüenthal offering fairly generous compensation to its victims. It is hard to resist the view that the dottiness of the English *sub judice* rules hamper sober investigative journalism – they would, for instance, have prevented the uncovering of Watergate had such a scandal occurred in Britain – and in the light of the trial of Jeremy Thorpe, it's hard to believe they do much to hamper the unsomber sort. It's doubtful whether any combination of a free press, cheap and generous legal aid, and virtuous drug companies can *guarantee* that no such disaster ever occurs again; what isn't doubtful is that this one was avoidable.

Blake Morrison

Two Legs Bad

Tradition and Experiment in English Poetry
by PHILIP HOBBSBAUM *Macmillan* £12

In the early part of this century, when there was still a need to establish English as an academic subject respectable in its own right, definitions of the 'Englishness' of our literature were seen as an essential part of the job. Good teachers like Richards and Empson were concerned to do something more, of course, but most undergraduates of that period present the 'typical' tutor as some pipe-smoking Anglo-Saxonist with a fondness for emphasising 'the importance of the native stock'. The last 20 years have seen a reaction against this: the emphasis has been on Comparative Literature, on interdisciplinary studies and on critical methods far removed from the homeland of Eng. Lit. No-one now, you'd have thought, would dare to speak of the 'proverbial pithiness' or 'earthy force' of our English tradition: the reek of stale tobacco smoke would be overpowering. But in his new book Philip Hobsbaum has done just that, re-opening debates that seemed to have died long since. It is a typically bold and aggressive move on Hobsbaum's part: but the result is little short of a disaster.

The writing of the book is dated 1968-77, but the idea that lies behind it can be traced back to 1961, when, in a radio broadcast called 'The Road Not Taken', Hobsbaum put forward what might be called the 'if only' theory of modern English poetry. If only

Hardy's poetry had not for so long been underestimated; if only Owen, Rosenberg and Edward Thomas had not been killed off in their prime; if only Eliot and Pound had stayed in America rather than starting their revolution in London – if only there had not been these 'atrocious strokes of luck', then English poetry might have developed a Modernism of its own. As it was, Hobsbaum argued, 'the central line of English poetry' died out, or was at any rate interrupted: between 1920 and 1950 our poets were faced with a sterile choice between 'reaction' (stuffy Victorianism) or 'revolution' (imitation of the usurping Americans). Only in Ted Hughes and Peter Redgrove, Cambridge contemporaries whom Hobsbaum was busy promoting along with 'The Group', were there at last signs that the real tradition of English poetry was being restored.

That 1961 broadcast, chopped and changed a bit, reappears here as Hobsbaum's penultimate chapter 'The Growth of English Modernism'; and its remarks on the current scene are updated in the final chapter where Hobsbaum recommends a 'poetry of barbarism' (to be found in Redgrove and others) as the antidote to a post-war English poetry which 'for all its virtues of decency and good sense is a poetry of decay'. But Hobsbaum has now extended his argument so as to take in not just the modern period but the history of English poetry from *Piers Plowman* onwards. The tradition/experiment thesis is made to explain everything from Langland through to Auden:

The mistake, as I see it, has been to imitate from time to time the style, as well as the subject-matter of foreign modes; and this is what, in the book, is termed 'experiment' . . . The claim put forward is that the central line of English poetry – the tradition, so to speak – is earthy, alliterative, colloquial, with a strong regard for structure and the claims of plot.

The thesis is repeated rather along the lines of Four Legs Good, Two Legs Bad, as if saying it often enough were bound to make it true. Pithy, local, proverbial, racy, idiomatic, muscular, gritty, tactile, thrusting, violent – this is English and all right. Polished, sweet, elegant, sophisticated, abstract, decorous, civilised – this is foreign and not all right. Imports from abroad are allowed only if raw materials; the finished product must have a Made in England stamp. This means that Chaucer, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, who were 'intelligently experimental', using continental matter but leaving their own mark on it, go to the top of the class. Poor marks, though, for those duffers Sidney, Spenser, Milton and Tennyson, all of whom were 'emasculated' (in Hobsbaum's macho universe a fate worse than death) 'by some Italianate ideal'. Out, too, go the Romantics: in one of his most provocative chapters Hobsbaum depicts them as self-pitying hysterics who, unlike the great English empiricists, failed to apply themselves properly in their reading (e.g. the foppish Keats, who 'hankered after classical legend but never troubled to master Latin'). Only Wordsworth escapes the rap, but even so he's caught maltreating his younger self: the 1850 revisions of the *Prelude* impose an 'otiose Miltonicism' on the 'sensuous vitality' of the 1805 original. This idea of decorous age restraining vigorous youth also influences Hobsbaum's reading of American literature: the strength of Whitman and his descendants is their barbaric yawp; they falter only when, as Whitman did while revising his *Leaves of Grass*, they

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gesture towards an 'imprisoning – Europeanised – culture'. The message for both English and American poets is the same: stay home, don't mature, show your native muscle.

Readers can be forgiven for feeling that they have heard some of this before. A similar, if less polemical and less blatantly jingoistic reading of English literary history can be found at times in the work of Leavis. One of the book's two epigraphs is a quotation from Leavis, and the master's animus against the Romantics, for example, is taken over by his former pupil. In *Revaluation* Leavis criticised Shelley for his 'weak grasp upon the actual'. Hobsbaum sees Shelley as a poet who 'forsook his natural talent in order to convert the world', and finds his ethereal imagery 'rather disgusting'. He also suggests that 'it is a weak grasp on the actual that renders Thomas Gray capable from time to time of writing nonsense'. Perhaps the echo is unwitting, perhaps Hobsbaum is simply stuck in an old groove. But one suspects that this is a quite deliberate 'Bring back Leavis' campaign. The campaign might have more chance of success were not parts of the book so slackly written. True, he calls it an 'informal history of English poetry', but even this seems optimistic. Some of his critical observations – *Don Juan* is said to 'exhale an extraordinarily distinctive atmosphere; it really is a world unto itself', Chaucer's pilgrims are (surprise, surprise) 'at once typical and also individual' – would hardly pass muster in an O-level essay. Hobsbaum's Leavisite affiliations also lead him to ignore recent scholarship. In his chapter on Chaucer Hobsbaum acknowledges the usefulness of thirteen 20th-century essays about the poet: not one of them is later than 1959, and most date back to the 1910s and 1920s.

These are formidable obstacles, and yet it's difficult not to feel at least a little affection for Hobsbaum's study. His enthusiasms are often wrong-headed – as when he offers Francis Berry as one of our leading contemporary poets – but they are at least enthusiasms: he comes over as someone who greatly enjoys both his reading, which is impressively wide, and his teaching (he generously acknowledges

any bright ideas passed on to him by his students). Moreover, in those parts of the book where he's not over-selling his tradition/experiment thesis, he has interesting things to say. He compares the different texts of *Piers Plowman*, suggesting how – with only a few changes – they might be made more accessible to present-day readers. He traces the influence of Ben Jonson on various minor 17th-century figures. He shows how Eliot is more of an American poet than has been acknowledged. And, in his best chapter, he follows the rise of the dramatic monologue in poetry, arguing that it arose at a time when playwrights and producers were putting emphasis on individual speeches rather than on plot. The vivid forcefulness with which Hobsbaum makes these different cases is the forcefulness which has made him such an important encourager of young British poets over the last 20 years. More's the pity, then, that for much of the book he chooses to throw his weight behind such a crude and simplistic version of Englishness.

Neal Ascherson

Ill Mated

The Case of Mr Crump by LUDWIG LEWISOHN
Allen Lane £5.95

It's rare – or at least I never met an example before – to find a novel which can be stood on its head. But *The Case of Mr Crump* is like that. It resembles those ugly Victorian gags, portraits which, when turned upside down, become another portrait, with eyebrows transformed into moustache, forehead wrinkles into lip-leers. Since 1926, when this novel about a hellish marriage was first published, the way in which we look on women's relationships to men has been altered almost out of recognition. And the reading of *Mr Crump*

registers, in the most startling way, the difficulty of returning with any kind of sympathy to attitudes adopted only 50 years ago by a clever American novelist, attitudes which seem to have drawn rich critical admiration at the time.

Sigmund Freud is quoted on the book-jacket: 'An incomparable masterpiece.' This rouses instant and well-grounded suspicion. At the end of the novel, one sees what the Doctor meant. This is the cautionary tale of a dissatisfied woman, who refuses to find 'fulfilment' in her proper womanly role as loving, subordinate breeder and homemaker. She has intellectual aspirations, she dreams of becoming a poet, she resents looking after home and children, she has a stronger sexual appetite than her husband, whom she bullies. She talks all the time about her needs rather than his. In the end, she gets her brains bashed out with a poker, because she won't let her husband have a divorce. Well, didn't she ask for it?

If she is the villainess, the husband is the tragic hero. He is gentle, irresolute, high-minded, seeking only a feather-bed life stuffed with concord. Just to add a decisive weight of schmaltz to his side of the scales, he is an artist – a really talented young American composer who might have been the New World's answer to Mahler or Sibelius . . . might have been, if his terrible wife had not destroyed him. This appeal to the sacredness of the artist's life may have been what persuaded Thomas Mann to contribute an ambiguous, patronising preface. *Mr Crump* was published in Europe because it was considered too sexual and squalid for the US Mail.

Mann (the preface is reprinted in this edition) praises Lewisohn for a 'manly, sincere, precise and strong' style. He does, however, remark on the novel's 'voluntary renunciation of mere aesthetic distinction, its readiness to make far-reaching aesthetic sacrifices in the service of documentary vigour' – itself a masterly demonstration of how to inject cyanide into the critical box of chocolates. He allows Lewisohn into the group of American writers who 'are striving to transform the handsome, energetic children of American civilisation into beings of a ripe and adult culture'. Finally, Mann observes that 'the characters are human beings – even the woman . . . Without the corrective of creative justice and insight, the author's feeling of solidarity with his hero might easily have made of the woman a mere demon'.

But that is what she is. The character of Anne Crump is the most hate-filled study of a woman in modern literature. Born in a down-at-heel family from Kentucky, she grows up in rented rooms and boarding-houses in Chicago, a girl who reads poetry and longs to write, who yearns to escape into a better existence. She marries a gambler and has unwanted children: 'Anne was too slovenly and lazy even to get up to wash.' She refuses to darn socks; she is insecure and aggressive. Herbert Crump, in contrast, is the child of a safe, loving German-American home, an only child raised to music and the sound of soft, admiring voices. Anne, who is much older, pounces on the gormless Herbert. Sexually inexperienced, he is rapidly manoeuvred into marriage.

He tries to compose; he tries to teach. But dragging at his heels is this half-educated termagant with her loathly relations and children, slouching about the home in a dirty shift, cleaning her nails on toothpicks, vigilant

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for any fancied hint that he thinks he's a cut above her. She even insists on being taken to meet his musical friends and patrons, and makes scenes if she is not invited. Ah, poor Herbert! She leaves floors unswept, laundry unwashed. She spends his money. Occasionally she does have a stab at housework, but 'after such unwonted activity, she would more than ever "bleed like a stuck pig" and thus for many weeks enjoy the double pleasure of martyrdom and of a justified liberation from "dirty work".' She is even wicked enough to be jealous of his relationships with a succession of ethereal young blondes. In the end, as we have seen, jealousy gets her brained.

I know nothing of Lewisohn's private life, but *Mr Crump* reads like autobiography, the drawing-up of a hysterical bill of attainder against a real woman. This is what Mann, I think, delicately implies with his 'the characters are human beings', and it is what makes this novel fascinating. For Lewisohn has given us so much detail, social and behavioural, about Anne that his fictional form can easily be knocked aside. It's possible to reach an entirely reversed judgment of Herbert and Anne, and most readers today will do so. They will see in Herbert the embodiment of middle-class male egoism, and they will see in Anne the tragic figure of a woman fighting for her freedom with every weapon she can lay hands on. She manages to make the climb from poverty into a cultured, bourgeois world, but the conventions of that world challenge her to embark on a second battle which she can only lose.

Craig Raine

The Big Fight

Boxing gloves wait on the table
of this dressing room

like dark rounds of pumpernickel
for a Last Supper

with his hangers-on,
trainer, manager, promoter...

His face embalmed with vaseline,
he sits quietly

or flexes his mummified hands
and jabs the air.

His mind is somewhere else
with the gloves:

they remind him
of childhood and chestnuts

on damp blotting paper
with neatly sprouted thumbs.

But his flesh retains
the touch of the stethoscope
and the doctor's tiny blows
on his back -

the prelude to battle
with his unfamiliar image

and the choirs of nausea.
Will his heavy hand lighten

and suddenly float to heaven
like a balloon?

His manager brings the gloves.
He gobbles in his gumshield.

But Herbert naturally has the last word, looking at her dead body:

Where now were her gibes and her malevolence and her ferocity, her lusts and treacheries and hates? How strong and unvanquishable she had been... Goodness might have made her almost great. Evil is both destroyer and destroyed.

After all, she was just a wicked woman. His thoughts turn to blonde Barbara, 'full of sweet serviceableness to him... the fancied, rancorous sense of inequality that disturbs the ill-mated never rose in their thoughts'. Then the cops presumably arrive and drag him off to Sing-Sing and the electric chair - the only consolation the reader is left with.

Valentine Cunningham

Hill 481

Apprentices of Freedom by JUDITH COOK
Quartet £4.95

So I said, 'Remember the hunger marches, lads. If our feet won't get us there our voices will, and whatever happens we'll bloody sing as if we were one hell of a column marching along'.

Thus Bob Cooney, an out of work Aberdonian who had worked his way through the ILP Guild of Youth into the CP, had marched against Mosley and unemployment and then on to Spain with the International Brigades, and was now scrambling away from the Stukas and the Italian tanks in the Republican army's rout in Aragón in 1938. Still resilient, despite little food or water or even cognac, his is the authentic voice of the British working man keeping his pecker up even after finding that sunny Spain provided precious little escape from the kind of troubles he supposed he'd left behind him at home. It's the tone we're familiar with from trench, ration-queue and Blitz: but not from Audenised Spain. Yet it's

voices like Cooney's that are typical of the British volunteer; gratifyingly, Judith Cook gives us lots of them.

I wish, in fact, she'd given us still more of the 200 or so surviving Spanish veterans' words, for this gathering of memories rightly strikes at our prime and misinformed Spanish myths. Especially the myth of the respectable volunteer, first strenuously pushed in *English Captain* (1939) by Tom Wintringham, who was anxious to prove that the 'lowest dregs of the unemployed' and Jews weren't heavily represented in the International Brigades. But Jewish names - Nathan, Levine, Quinn, Davidovich, Josephs - abound in Judith Cook's account, as they did in Thirties Leftist quarters. And 'getting the hell out of the dole' is a repeated reason for leaving England. It simply wasn't an intellectuals' or poets' war; and the unpublished, the unbookish, the mass of the ordinary, unmemorialised volunteers rise now to kill - one hopes stone dead - the lie that Spain was the preserve of Fox, Cornford, Bell, Spender, and all the other poets.

Judith Cook's veterans are a proper rebuke to literary historians. What's strongly noticeable, however, is the proletarians' deferential fascination with the style and fate of their handful of bourgeois comrades. Ralph Fox, 'very dashing' in black leather; John Cornford, looking 'like a bloody Greek god', or 'like Lord Byron' with the white bandage round his head that made him an easy sniper's target; Clifford Wattis, 'the actor's brother, who looked like a real English aristocrat, all peaches and cream': it was a workers' war, but the workers evidently needed the buttress of middle-class socialists as much as Orwell needed the comradeship of that Italian soldier who 'shook my hand'.

This isn't the sort of reflection that strikes Judith Cook. Admirably informative though her witnesses are, her book's approach to them is too gently unpressing. Why, we want her to inquire further, did so many volunteers choose to abandon their wives and children to terrible struggle and inevitable short commons in Britain? Who was it in the hierarchy urging George Aitken to have deserters and

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nervous wrecks shot? How quick on the draw were notorious CP disciplinarians like Big Pete Kerrigan? What in particular made Aitken (a founder of the CP in Britain) and Albert Cole drop out of the Party after the Spanish war? Why did Fred Copeman become a Catholic after it? A wider inquiry would also have scotched more myths than that of the poets' war: Judith Cook leaves too intact the Stalinist notions that the International Brigades were the only home for British volunteers and that the POUM were a completely bad lot. And by what ironic twist did proletarian Alec McDade's unorthodox 'There's A Valley in Spain called Jarama' get itself attributed to orthodox and bourgeois CP poet Charles Donnelly?

Judith Cook's picture, then, is too small-screen: her proletarian volunteers demand still more placing in their times than she's prepared to grant them. For instance, their relish for violence in that violent period ('the kind of men . . . who just like a fight and are going to get it anywhere') can't be stressed enough. These were rebellious hards, deserters, mutineers, Glaswegian toughs, IRA gunmen, familiar with the rough end of the truncheons, often in the nick for slugging Mosleyites with pieces of lead-piping or scragging policemen off their horses. Look how many amateur boxing champs they included – Sam Wild, Joe Norman, Fred Copeman, Tony Maguire. Copeman was quite happy to 'batter the daylight' out of a drunken Glaswegian by way of keeping order. No wonder the British became shock troops, the men for holding nasty positions. Small wonder they 'never took prisoners' ('Surrender be fucked' Maguire was heard to shout, emptying his automatic into some surrendering Moors). And their thuggish heroic must be related to the wider cult of the heroic in their era. They continually have their eye on film heroes (they found Errol Flynn not a bad chap; the Ebro wasn't 'a bloody film'). They're as conscious of the heroic bigness of small men as any T. E. Lawrence fan (little Josephs 'is only five feet two . . . but ever since I got back from Spain . . . I'm six feet tall'). Excluded in Britain from the bourgeois mountain-climbing heroic – no F6 for them – they had to climb the Pyrenees to enter Spain, and found themselves struggling endlessly up bullet-spitting heights: Suicide Hill, Mosquito Hill, Hill 666, Hill 481. An ironic way for proletarians to join Ransom, I. A. Richards and Michael Roberts up on high.

What perhaps needs most underlining is the ways the Spanish War replicated for these ordinary volunteers the grisly experience of the first world war. The story of Judith Cook's men sounds so familiar: incompetent generals; battles fought over map references the Staff never visited; total intransigence by the Base at King Street towards men broken by fear or exercised over the plight of their wives (the Party cannily shipped out miners' leader Will Paynter to calm mutinous trade unionists); and, all the time, the visiting cheerleaders, like Pollitt, Haldane and Claud Cockburn (as Frank Pitcairn he addressed a meeting at which men were actually getting picked off by snipers: 'awful stupidity', 'only the communists could do it').

Like Auden and Spender, Pollitt and Haldane toddled off home with their carcasses still intact. The ordinary men, who had innocently set off wearing only plimsolls, with no money or passports or word of a foreign language,

were left to bite on the bullet, or on the wedges of wood they hung about their necks for the purpose, to cool their machine-guns by peeing on them ('you'd be afraid to pull it out in case it got shot off'), to die or be fearfully wounded, always pitifully short of aircraft and artillery cover. 'And so help me God as he said it his whole guts fell out like bloody giblets.' Base Details – as Sassoon put it – indeed. But, nonetheless, reading these survivors, and in particular the most moving reflections of Nan Green whose husband was killed, aged 34, 'in the very last hour of the last day', one is drawn strongly to something like Sassoon's paradoxical conclusion about the first world war:

I was rewarded by an intense memory of men whose courage had shown me the power of the human spirit. Such men . . . outweighed all failures. Against the background of the War and its brutal stupidity those men had stood glorified by the thing which sought to destroy them . . .

Andrew Motion

Self's the Man

The Face Behind The Face by YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO translated by Arthur Boyars and Simon Franklin *Boyars* £6.95 & £2.25
Selected Poems by RICHARD MURPHY *Faber* £1.95

The School of Eloquence by TONY HARRISON *Rex Collings* £5

Life Before Death by P. J. KAVANAGH *Chatto & Windus* £3

Like most of his modernist contemporaries, Eliot believed that 'The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality'. In recent years, few poets have disagreed more conspicuously than Yevgeny Yevtushenko. His reputation depends to a large extent on the inflation of personality – apparent radicalism, a charismatic background, and good looks have ensured him an enthusiastic public reception. Private reception is a different matter: what commands the stage at readings is vulnerable to charges of solipsism on the page. Yevtushenko obviously realises this, and defends himself at length in the introduction to *The Face Behind The Face*. He disapproves of masks because they are associated with 'the idea of forced collectivism', and frankly admits that, 'despite the kaleidoscope of geographical and psychological situations' in his book, it has a single hero: himself. The face behind – and in front of – the face is always his own, and its expression is unashamedly self-absorbed.

One might expect this to herald a collection of rewarding intimacy. But for all his emphasis on individuality, Yevtushenko reveals remarkably little. Rather than soul-searching, he gives advice – often of spectacular banality. 'Life is complex precisely because/It ebbs away', he warns us, and adds 'There's a lot of evil in the world/But much good as well'. In his attempts to describe an obscure personal crisis, the same tendency to bluster about abstracts and absolutes persists. He is so inhibitingly aware of his role as a poet that words like 'pity', 'love' and 'forgiveness'

become blank cards. They are dealt out with all the paraphernalia of concern, but find little human application. And when he turns his attention to poetic theory, they appear even more smugly didactic:

Eternal verities rest on the precise,
Precision, though, consists in sacrifice,
Not for nothing does the bard get scared –
The price of brevity is blood.

Without a parallel text, it is not easy to tell whether the pomposity of these lines is Yevtushenko's fault or his translators'. But no matter whose it is, they teach a lesson that he persistently ignores.

Although much of Richard Murphy's work has a high literary finish, it seldom reflects a self-regarding author. The title poem of his first collection, 'Sailing to an Island', is an obvious example: it describes a sea-crossing in which the storming elements unleash a blizzard of Classical and Anglo-Saxon references. But these only serve to dramatise the voyage and its intentions. By striking a balance between ancient and modern speech, they seek to unite history with the present. The community which Murphy eventually reaches on Clare Island includes – by association if not in fact – Ulysses and The Seafarer.

This search for correspondence dominates his *Selected Poems*. A mere seven sections are taken from 'The Battle of Aughrim', but they all testify to his belief that 'The past is happening today', and many of the poems from *High Island* pursue the same idea in directly personal terms. Recalling scenes from his comfortable Ceylonese childhood enables him to define his place in contemporary Irish society. Such concentration on a single theme has advantages – it provides coherence and integrity. But it also has drawbacks: the more clearly he analyses his poetic interests, the paler their visionary gleam becomes. And as wonder gives way to comprehension, Murphy's special strengths are compromised. Ambitious narrative structures are gradually replaced by over-scrupulous lyrics, and the sense of exploration by one of anxious, protective retrenchment.

Tony Harrison has a more speculative attitude to his talent. The epigraph to *The School of Eloquence* admits that how he became a poet is 'a mystery', and he spends a good deal of the book trying to explain its causes and effects. The 15 Meridian sonnets which form the title sequence are his most determined attempt. Their stylish portraits of the artist as a young Leeds scholar show him torn between his family and his aspirations, his peers and his Latin prose, and his received idiom and an ideal articulation. In each case, he opts for the chance of self-improvement, and the result is not to make him sound patronising, but guilty, rueful and unable to communicate with his past in its own terms. A coalminer is 'lost in this sonnet for the bourgeoisie', and the language of 'mi mam' is 'the tongue that once I used to know/but can't bone up on now'.

These tensions are no less evident in the form than the content of Harrison's poems. As his lines buckle, break up and collect themselves round rhyme-words, his diction veers from the lay to the learned. The effect is to create sustained disjuncture, rather than homogeneity, and most of the time it serves its purpose well. But there is a sense in which his expertise can be counterproductive. On a few occasions in 'The School of Eloquence' his skilful conjuring tricks risk supplanting the

very emotions they mean to produce: we are shown a beautifully polished top-hat and no rabbit. Fortunately such disappointments are rare, and the second part of his book more than compensates for them by including a few candidly straightforward pieces. In these, tenderness is never a prey to linguistic virtuosity, and doubts are persistently emphasised by the demands of technique:

Bad weather and the public mess
drive us to private tenderness,
though I wonder if together we,
alone two hours, can ever be
love's anti-bodies in the sick,
sick body politic.

P. J. Kavanagh has no time for formal brilliance. He prefers poems to be 'Beyond decoration, humble, in plain rhyme', and diligently practises what he preaches. The reflections on love, mortality, children and nature which fill *Life Before Death* are all written with fastidious reticence. But humility has dangers as well as virtues – largely because it can seem an insufficiently distinct attitude to experience. And Kavanagh does not always avoid them. His collection's title depends on a phrase made famous by Seamus Heaney, and several of its contents echo the cadences of Edward Thomas. But where Thomas is confident in his lack of confidence, and audible in his quiet-speaking, Kavanagh's poems sometimes settle for too absolute a gentleness. They never fail to describe an attractive personality, but they seldom transcend the boundaries of its modesty.

Jeremy Treglown

All in the Family

Only Children by ALISON LURIE *Heinemann*
£4.95

Alison Lurie is at least two novelists: the wry, comical observer of middle-class American adulteries, mostly involving at least a few campus-dwellers; and an intenser, rather maudlin writer, inclined to go on about landscapes and seasons, and to tell us (despite her reputation as a new Jane Austen) exactly what we ought to be thinking. The second of these novelists is the one who stands back from the married professor, Brian, in *The War Between the Tates*, as he begins to cavé in to his student Wendy's efforts to get into bed with him: in his mind, we're told firmly, 'the soapy waves of false logic sloshed towards the shore'. It's the first who describes Brian's wife, when he has left home, as cleaning out from his chest of drawers 'all those identical rolled dark-brown orlon socks clustered together like horsedrop-pings'. The second, in *Real People*, writes in a writerly way about a woman writer at a kind of health-farm for writers and other artists; the first, in *The Nowhere City*, hilariously pins down L.A. in the mid-Sixties, and details what happens to an East Coast couple who move there.

What helps link the two Luries is a characteristic view of time that runs through all her

work, and a related concern with how people's pasts affect their present and future. It's not only domesticated feminism that makes her particularly interested in – and good at writing about – children. They are the clearest embodiment of her proposition that 'identity is at the mercy of circumstances, of other people's actions' – a statement made in *The War Between the Tates* but implicit in all her novels, and nowhere more strongly than in *Only Children*. The story, a cross between L. P. Hartley and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, scrutinises the half-comprehending, half-nightmarishly distorted responses of two eight-year-old girls to a weekend house-party during which each of their respective sets of parents is screwed up by the other.

For the parents it's a temporary crisis; but the impact on the girls looks like being permanent. Time helps Lurie's novels to be less schizophrenic because it is simultaneously a comic subject and a serious one. Her couples' tragic efforts to order their lives are mocked by the inescapable effects of heredity and early environment, and by their own inability on the one hand to control their children, and on the other to avoid controlling them through their effect on their personalities. Ironic juxtapositions like this of past, present and likely future are enacted in very different ways: in the historian Paul's collision with the futuristic L.A. in *The Nowhere City*; in the fusion of 19th-century religious revivalism with SF in the mad sect which is the subject of *Imaginary Friends*; in Brian's affair with his young student, and so on. In *Only Children*, it's embodied not only in the child-adult division, but in the novel's whole design, a mixture of present-tense and past-tense narratives devoted to a period which is, for the first time in Lurie's work (though it's a development that her evident and increasing unease with the present might have led one to anticipate) the moderately historic past: the Thirties.

It's not a funny story, although – given how easy it has previously been to predict not only that Lurie's characters are going to make out, but precisely with whom – it does contain a central joke: no one in the end makes out at all. It suffers from a painfully good central character: the sensitive, wise, unattached Anna, who runs a progressive school but lives in the past in a farmhouse with oil lamps and an outdoor lavatory. Anna is prone, particularly towards the end of the novel, to sub-Lurie moralisations; she says, for example, that she's 'always thought that most of life was like walking through thick woods . . . always overgrown and brambly. Very damp and marshy in places, too'. She is an old girlfriend of one of her guests, the philandering Dan, who has another crack at her after he fails with the flirtatious wife of another guest, Bill. Dan and Bill, both nominal socialists, collide – one is an advertising executive, the other a social welfare administrator – and a number of political and sexual diagrams are extracted both from their relationship and from the way it affects, and is affected by, the way in which they, their wives and children inter-react. It's all deftly done, but not as complicated as it seems meant to look: Lurie's diagrams are diagrams, too often; her characters over-differentiated, over-explained. There's a lot of Psychology and Sociology around. But while it's not my favourite of her stories so far, it keeps you guessing and is a less contrived break-out from campusville than *Real People*.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Peter Conrad

The Secret Sharers

Parsifal Metropolitan Opera, New York
Parsifal Covent Garden; further performances
20, 23 April

In *Parsifal* Wagner completes his dissolution of musical form by accomplishing the dissolution of drama. The chromaticism of *Tristan* is an ambiguous stream of consciousness. Traditionally, counterpoint twines together compatible themes; but Wagner's counterpoint in *Tristan*'s delirium superimposes themes which are incompatible because they represent opposed emotions: Tristan's yearning for Isolde coexists with his revulsion from her. The musical instability which subverts tonality in *Tristan* becomes a principle of character in *Parsifal*. Kundry is a contrapuntal invention. Not only a compound of antagonistic themes, she is also a conflation of two personae disjunct in Wagner's first plans for the opera: the raddled penitent of the outer acts, and the alluring temptress in Klingsor's garden. In her scene with Parsifal, Kundry is therefore the agent of two contradictory purposes. As Klingsor's obedient demon, she craves Parsifal's destruction, but as the ravaged Magdalen she seeks through him her own absolution. Ubiquitous in space, Kundry is also undyingly extended in time. Her character unfolds temporally into the metamorphoses which mark her weary journey through history. She was Herodias once, as Klingsor says, and has had new names in each new apparition.

This conundrum of time's intersection with space is central to *Parsifal*. Drama occupies space, music moves in time. Their overlapping in *Parsifal* corresponds theatrically to the theological mystery of the Incarnation, when eternity descends into time. Rituals, like those staged in *Parsifal* and like *Parsifal* itself, solemnly suspend time by spatialising it. When the scenery starts to move, Gurnemanz explains to Parsifal that space here becomes time. That is drama's achievement, which Wagner in these automated scene-changes is dangerously parodying: to encapsulate history, to extrapolate from its claustrophobic space indefinite expanses of time, to make its little room an everywhere. Music's achievement in *Parsifal* is complementary: to turn time into space by endless recurrence. Kundry exists in a state of schizophrenic tension, alternating between vengeful rage and benediction, because the warring selves she has accumulated through her long experience in time are all spatially present at once in the recapitulatory complication of the music. Counterpoint is Kundry's psychological ailment, forcing her to act simultaneously in two contrary directions.

The *leit-motif* is now a psychological motive. Character is dissolved into a subliminal musical will. Parsifal changes from bucolic dolt to redeemer when he hears (or overhears) the motto which demarcates that new role. Relationships in *Parsifal* therefore depend on musical association not dramatic

interaction. The characters are all secret sharers in one another's lives. They all know more about each other than dramatic circumstance warrants, and they owe their psychological intuitions not to drama but to music. Gurnemanz has a suspicion of Parsifal's destiny, and Kundry has participated in his past, since she completes his recital of his youthful adventures. Both she and Parsifal are implicated in the agony of Amfortas, but their conviction of identity is created by music: their only dramatic relation to him is as observers of his distress. Music connects characters, because their kinship is psychological. When Gurnemanz describes the betrayal of Amfortas, Kundry stirs dementedly in her sleep. When she embraces Parsifal, he responds by invoking Amfortas.

The dissolution of drama ordains that hieratic stillness which Arthur Symons described at Bayreuth in 1897. The aim of drama generally, he declared, is bustle, gestural activity; but *Parsifal* has a studied, contemplative stasis. It absorbs action into reflection. Hence its expository loquacity: it narrates instead of dramatising, because its concern is not the order of events but their psychological effect. Characters in *Parsifal* define themselves not by what they do or say but by how they watch or listen. The meaning of Gurnemanz's first narration is the response it arouses in the dormant Kundry. Likewise the purpose of his narrative in the third act is to wound the listening Parsifal into remorse. The Grail ceremony exists to be observed by the non-participant Parsifal, and Kundry's account of Herzeleide's death is significant too only as it works a psychological change in him: she parabolically kills his mother in order to supplant her, educating him in the passage from maternal solicitude to sexual desire. During Parsifal's outburst after their embrace, it is Kundry we attend to, because of the alteration his access of wisdom provokes in her.

Drama in *Parsifal* tends to stillness (as Symons noted) and even to silence. The growth of characters is registered not in singing but in bouts of mute miming – Parsifal's shame when Gurnemanz chides him for slaughtering the swan, or his bemusement in the temple. The third act austere annihilates drama. Parsifal as he enters is both silenced and obscured inside his armour, yet required to convey the exhaustion and failing confidence of his quest. Kundry must enact her salvation with the aid of only two words and some discreet groaning.

Jon Vickers and Christa Ludwig, the principals of the Met's revival of *Parsifal*, understand the art of psychological transition which adjusts dramatic development to the slow, chromatically infirm evolution of the music. The Parsifal of Vickers begins in gawky puerility, fidgeting nervously with his bow and volunteering to impress the grown-ups when questioned about his exploits. But the character at once suffers a musical decomposition.

He bounds on like an aggressive Siegfried, proud of his hunting skills, only to be demoralised and disarmed, bludgeoned into compassion when Gurnemanz makes him inspect his dead quarry. A bellicose heroism sustained by violence and self-aggrandisement is humbled into a saintly heroism of service and expiatory suffering. In the third act as well Parsifal enters as a warrior but undergoes another disinvestiture: as in the first act he repentantly breaks his bow, so now he discards his armour and kneels beside his spear to pray.

Vickers catches these musical modulations of character exactly. Rebuked by Gurnemanz, his swagger collapses into shame. In Klingsor's garden, the comic oaf changes as we watch into a tragic victim. At first Vickers is trustingly flirtatious with the flower-maidens, but when Kundry summons him his demeanour stiffens and his voice, blunting its assertive edge, turns tender, sad and helpless. During their embrace, his hand clawing the air signals his terror. The voice he unsheathes when he breaks away to name Amfortas is of numbing force, and contains in its urgency all the pain of the world. Vickers brandishes this volume of voice, frightening in its excess, only to renounce it. He submits reluctantly to the sanctification in the third act, embarrassed by Kundry's homage and depressed by the strain of his mission, and he sings his Good Friday music in a ghostly whisper, suggesting at once Parsifal's flagging energy and his cowed, grateful resignation.

Christa Ludwig's Kundry is a characterisation of equal genius. The dishevelled, groveling witch has a ripe, gentle, sorrowing voice. Even her screams are beautiful, the expression of her grief as she commiserates with her victims. Parsifal's sudden maturing startles then disables her, and her seductive ingratitude changes to staggering hysteria as she recalls her curse. Rejected, her suppliancy becomes hatred, and she tries to hold Parsifal by subjecting him to the same malediction which constrains her. In the third act, Ludwig is transfixing despite her silence, stunned when Gurnemanz awakens her and aghast to find she is still alive, mesmerised by Parsifal as she follows him to the temple, beatifically expiring at last.

Covent Garden's new production, by contrast, is a miserable disappointment. Peter Hofmann is a bland, stolid Parsifal, whose nearest approach to intensity is pouting sullenness. Yvonne Minton is too placid for the wild Kundry of the first act, and too demure for the temptress of the second. The only aspect of the character she conveys is a scowling resentfulness. Nor has she the voice for the part: there is no rapture in her singing, as there is no zeal in Hofmann's, and her imprecations are desperate yelps. She is handicapped by a pair of absurd costumes. For the first act she is dressed as a ragged gypsy, for the second she changes to a gilded queen bee. The Met's Gurnemanz, Martti Talvela, was the mournful conscience and memory of the work's society; Covent Garden has Kurt Moll, who sings impressively but acts the professional raconteur. The Amfortas in New York, Bernd Weikl, lyrically emphasised the character's passivity and prostration; Norman Bailey at Covent Garden is vocally too gruff and rugged, and dramatically too hectic.

The fault in all these cases is that of the director, Terry Hands, who is baffled by the anti-dramatic severity of the work and encourages the singers to emote, whereas for

Symons the superiority of *Parsifal* was its representation of character meditatively immobilised and time ritualistically arrested: 'It is difficult to express the delight with which one sees, for the first time, people really motionless on the stage.' To animate the drama, Hands enlists the aid of choreography and even hydraulics. Kundry retains a troupe of fuzzy ballerinas to stalk Parsifal on her behalf, and Amfortas writhes on a levitating platform, which upends itself as an improvised stage.

At the Met, James Levine conducted with self-effacing devotion, stealing into the pit unobserved and unapplauded so that the first prelude materialised out of nowhere. At Covent Garden, Solti the antic dervish gleefully spices up the erotomaniac episode in Klingsor's garden, but is otherwise leaden. In Levine's performance the encounter between Kundry and Parsifal is a slow-motion dream, its unflinching rhythm abruptly disrupted when Parsifal rejects her. But under Solti the meditative scenes drag, and have to be bumped along by intermittent injections of energy. When Solti can't be frenzied, he is merely dreary.

Television

Julian Barnes

Makin' Noise

It's logical, I suppose, if we are to be serious about sexual equality, that women should be given every chance to join the army, to travel the world, meet foreigners, and kill them. If the principle of equal opportunity means anything, then it must include the opportunity to be nasty and brutish as well as short, to wield a serrated bayonet, and blow the baddies to smithereens. The second episode of *Women at Arms* (BBC-2) showed women being trained for this arcane parity: they slogged up hills wearing huge packs, and were taught to yell hysterically at a putative enemy. 'You betta be makin' noise, Miss,' a West Point instructor bawled civilly at a tiny girl trainee with scarcely enough puff to swing the huge padded log with which she had been encumbered (are guns really that short?). However socially just one felt the British, American and Israeli armies to be, there were plenty of times when you couldn't help laughing a bit. Studies have shown, for instance, that when women throw a hand grenade, in seven out of ten cases the chances are 50 per cent that they'll kill either themselves or a member of their own side. To which I suppose the fair reply is that a non-sexist hand grenade will have to be developed, one lighter and more contoured to the female hand, so that our girl killers will be able to loft it beyond the self-fragging 15-yard mark.

It was to the credit of Diane Harron's three reports that the more unlikely aspects of the process of turning women into 'first-class men' weren't shirked; she addressed herself honestly to the question of whether, if you integrate an armed force, the result is a monstrosity. It was the Israeli army – perhaps not surprisingly, given its pragmatic

tradition – which seemed to have best managed the problem of integration: there, women are allowed to do almost everything except fight, and their presence apparently 'helps create a tranquil atmosphere in the units' – a point illustrated by everyone joining in a demin-and-boots Israeli Helston Furry. The American Army expects the most from its women (i.e. expects a greater percentage effort from them than from their men), and also gives them full weapon training. Whether or not women would kill as easily as men is a question that happily can't be all that well researched. 'Would you be prepared to do this in a war situation?' a girl recruit was asked as she was leaving sub-machine-gun practice; and she offered a deathlessly indicative reply: 'Possibly, yes, for sure.'

As for the British armed forces, they were shown to contain some very decent honorary blokes, and some giggling integrees: as a short-haired, baggy-fatigued, androgynous recruit was swung across a practice river bed on a rope-and-pulley system, an RAF NCO commented, 'Obviously the combat kit makes them less becoming – but that's an advantage as far as we're concerned.' We threw up also the most poignant story of the whole series: the case of the former girl leader of the White Helmet motorcycle display team. Frequently called upon to travel long distances from show to show with her team, she found herself getting on first-name terms with them: humanly inevitable, militarily unforgivable. Constantly rebuked for this breach of discipline, she resigned her commission; whereupon, determined to 'hurt back' for the many hurts the army had caused her, she posed for a spread in *Mayfair*: army gear, combat helmet, black suspender belt, and a lot of flesh. If every picture tells a story, this quaint emblem had a three-decker novel in it.

The Book Programme (BBC-2) ended its excellent series with what might have been billed as the Battle of Baldies: Robinson v. Yevtushenko. Alas, it proved a non-confrontation: Robbie confined himself to voiceover, while Zhenya for the most part hid his superdome (the hair is brushed straight forwards from the crown, but also brushed forwards *over each temple*) under a rakish, see-no-evil cap. There were a few back-of-limo shots of Yevtushenko – 'To be Russian poet is kind of unheppy heppiness' – but no straight interviewing: perhaps he wasn't going to risk what happened when he last encountered Melvyn Bragg on *Tonight* (there was a presumably sarcastic reference to this in a line of an abysmal poem Yevtushenko composed in English during a fit of post-partural disturbance: 'You are like TV audience of Melvyn Bragg' – it rhymed with 'leg'). If this was one of the *Book Programme*'s less successful numbers, it was largely because Yevtushenko was handled, as the Russian phrase has it, 'with mitts of porcupine'. He was taken very much on his own assessment (as high as sky-writing); his political record as an establishment dissident was deliberately placed on one side; but most of all, no one bothered to examine the poetry. In English it sounded rather banal, uninventive and repetitious; we were left as much in the dark about its quality as the girl fan who came up to Zhenya at an Oxford party and said, 'It makes me wish I could speak German – I mean Russian.'

Life on Earth (BBC-2) also came to the end of its run – also on a slight downbeat. This marvellously shot series has had some extra-

ordinary moments – the tree-flying frogs, the anteater snorting back a whole colony of ants, the mealworm-catching bat, the hyena pack pulling a wildebeest's balls off, David Attenborough spooning with a gorilla – and, as far as its frontman goes, has successfully reminded us that you can be informed and enthusiastic without in the least turning into Huw Wheldon. Attenborough has panted up a lot of hills in the past months to illuminating effect; and his last programme lacked zest only because he was dealing with that evolutionary anti-climax, man. Perhaps, too, because his presentation of *homo sapiens* as mainly a problem-solver, a smart Wellsian deployer of shiny technology, seemed a libel on the animals of the earlier episodes. Where, for instance, were the human equivalents of that riveting, much-returned-to sequence of the pride of lions chomping their magenta way through a zebra carcass? The unspoken moral thread of *Life on Earth* has been that animals become more inventively vicious the higher up the evolutionary scale they are; it seemed a pity to duck the pay-off.

Art

John Spurling

All That Fall

Sutherland Marlborough Fine Art

Christopher Wood Durham Light Infantry Museum, 24 April-20 May; Aberdeen Art Gallery, 9 June-8 July; Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, 14 July-12 August; Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, 18 August-16 September

Graham Sutherland, as Roberto Tassi's introduction to *The Complete Graphic Work* (Thames and Hudson £25) reminds us, began as an engraver. Two of his twilit, Palmeresque etchings from 1925 are currently on view in the Tate, but the book reproduces still earlier work, done under the influence of Rembrandt, Whistler and Méryon. There is a particularly fine drypoint from 1922, when he was 19, of two greyhounds racing down a bare slope, their forelegs pushed backwards between their hindlegs, their wedge-shaped heads stretched out like blades towards the invisible quarry and underneath their airborne bodies a single, jagged triangle of shadow. Apart from two etchings with religious subjects – *The Expulsion from Eden* and *Cain and Abel*, where Abel lies in a bramble-thicket while a spiky-haired Cain starts away with blood dripping from his hand – the greyhounds are the only early indication of Sutherland's penchant for the menacing aspects of Nature. Even when the Palmer look begins to give way to the Paul Nash look in three etchings of 1929-31, the mood is still mysterious rather than actively threatening.

In the mid-Thirties, after visits to Dorset and Wales, Sutherland started to paint and to look like no one but himself. The two moods persist, but now resolved into a kind of dialectic between the curves and rounded, bulky forms of the landscape at large and the grotesque, twisted, spiky forms of the fore-

ground details. Broad washes of intense colour reinforce the lyrical, 'beautiful' side of the argument; line takes care of the hard side. In general one can say that Sutherland sees the distance as sweet and the immediate object as alarming.

A good number of the Welsh drawings, watercolours and gouaches from the mid-Thirties to mid-Forties are now on permanent display in the Graham Sutherland Gallery at Picton Castle, Haverfordwest. A selection of these, together with 14 large oils from the Seventies which Sutherland has also given to the Picton gallery, are now being shown in London under the pompous title 'The Sutherland Gift to the Nation'. How grateful should the Nation be? Roberto Tassi is in no doubt of Sutherland's stature. His text is larded with superlatives. Moore, Bacon and Matisse are all put down. The 'standing forms' of the Fifties are 'the masterpieces of the shaken heart of the century'. Sutherland's work is 'stupendous... supreme... dazzling... exceptional'. It's all going a bit too far.

Sutherland remains a gifted and still exploratory graphic artist, as his recent series of aquatints, *Bees*, demonstrates. He has done in his time some remarkable small, romantic landscapes, charged with feeling, as well as at least one outstanding portrait – that of Somerset Maugham. Above all, he has made his own the depiction of certain organic forms – twisted trees, thorns, roots and insects – which re-express in 20th-century terms an essentially Gothic outlook: that man has been expelled from Eden, that he is heir to the bramble-thicket. But Sutherland is no more a great naturalist than Bacon is a great anatomist. Both are preachers, rhetoricians, using natural forms merely as the ingredients of their parables. Sutherland's *Bestiary* tells you nothing new about the creatures portrayed, though something about his own notions of them; even so, these notions tend to be generalised, not to say banal – that bats swarm and frighten you in the dark against a broken window, that a ram's head is mainly a great molar mincing-machine. By comparison, say, with David Attenborough's *Life on Earth*, they seem not only inadequate as animal representations but almost an insult to the viewer's intelligence. Sutherland is bad at birds too, for the same reason: he's not really interested in their forms, only in the vague sense of foreboding they can be made to stand for. On the other hand, he responds marvelously to insects, perhaps because he finds them more ambivalent (complicated machine-like organisms, which are at once beautiful and sinister); perhaps because, like roots and rocks, they are easier to observe with close attention.

But even the intricacies of roots and rocks have become overwhelmed by strivings towards significance in the large oil paintings of the Seventies. Studies of rocks are transformed into a cluster of aspiring, Pentecostal minarets or into a chalice with leaping flames at its centre; root forms are softened and sorted into tasteful harvest-festival arrangements against stage-set backcloths in pretty colours. Everything is, as it were, an offering, suffused in holy light. Late Sutherland, like late Palmer, has conceived the fatal desire to proclaim and trumpet his visionary status.

Most of Christopher Wood's best paintings were done in the last two years of his life, 1928-30. Two years older than Sutherland, he was a doctor's son who received no training in

art and precious little education of any kind. Mesmerised by the Paris jet-set of the Twenties, addicted to opium and emotionally centred on his mother, he threw against everything that threatened to drag him down the solid, salty hulls and harbours of Brittany and Cornwall. Bright daylight, gritty texture, the thickness and heaviness of the earth and everything on it, including human beings, are his hallmarks; but always in amongst them, painted in shifting shades of blue, black and green is the equally weighty sea; the sky usually acts as another harbour wall, grey, white and grainy. Three quarters of the paintings on view in this splendid travelling show, which started at the Minories, Colchester, still look like apprentice work; but the other quarter are so complete, so unforgettable that one can't envisage any development at all. Perhaps, if he had not been so desperate, he would simply have taken a lifetime to arrive at the same result.

Sport

Russell Davies

Sunstruck

It seems only a month ago (and, comfortingly, it was) that I stood shivering in a compost-scented gale to bring you the gist – granted, you did not ask for it – of Cambridge United's galling nil-one defeat at the hands etc. of Notts County. But what a change was to come over the place on Easter Saturday. Beetroot-red policemen lined the blistering trail towards an azure horizon, where the floodlights of the Abbey Stadium seemed to sprout with all the absurd optimism of palm-trees in a mirage. Inside, the ground was loud with mothballed T-shirts, few of them according well with Cambridge's colour-scheme (already pretty ghastly) of black and amber. The breeze had shifted from its accustomed origin at the Allotments End; now it puffed gently across from somewhere behind the grandstand, bringing a delicate breath of South African sherry, cheese puffs and suburban Havana from the Directors' Box.

Since we last saw them, United have put their oar a couple more times into the vexatious struggle at the top of the Second Division. A goalless home draw against West Ham was played out in front of Cambridge's first full-house in the League – no fewer (and no more) than 11,406 people; and an away draw against Crystal Palace completed their set of good away results against the Division's top teams. It was also one of their better London results: a 5-0 defeat at West Ham, and a 5-1 at Fulham, are the big blots on the Cambridge season.

On this day, as it happened, Fulham were the visitors, flapping on to the field in what looked like specially thinned, bleached and faded Arab-style white strip, their tropical kit. Fulham have been, undisguisedly, in the second rank of London clubs for some time now, but suddenly that seems no disgrace at all. For should Brighton, Stoke and Sunderland win promotion, as is perfectly possible, and Chelsea, Birmingham and QPR be relegated,

as is more than likely, then only Arsenal and Tottenham, of the London clubs, will be left in Division One. However, Fulham did not play on this occasion as if the thought of re-emerging from the pack had lately occurred to them. Apart from a shot on the turn, and over the bar, by Davies (last year's signing from Merthyr, too small for rugby) and a noisy, speculative dip from far out by Beck (from QPR via Coventry), it was a performance that could hardly have been more absent-footed if the entire Fulham squad had spent the morning poling along in punts. The only man to make his expected mark was centreback Richard Money, who contrived, after five minutes, the kind of 'clumsy challenge' that keeps a saleable striker who is mindful of the end-of-season integrity of his limbs (Biley, naturally) more or less out of the thick of the game for the rest of the 90 minutes.

The sun continued to boggle down. Nothing the mushy-peas ladies could do, by way of lubricating the product with mint sauce, could, shift it faster in the heat. 'Come on, Christie,' yelled the crowd at Floyd Streete, the Cambridge number 7, as though to imbue the fellow with aspirations murderous. In fact, they were confusing him with Cambridge's usual number 7, the altogether slighter Derrick Christie, who also happens to be black. Crowds take a lot of educating, don't they? Granted the favour of a great many corners in the first half, Cambridge persisted in the wasteful tactic of getting Streete, a large and bustling player, to take them. Finally abandoning this in favour of the obvious notion that five-foot-nothing Steve Spriggs should oblige with the flag-kick instead, they scored at once: Spriggs's kick swerved and died at the near post, got a back-header from Cambridge's other bankable investment, centre-half Steve Fallon, and landed on the far-post head of Tom Finney, who did the suitable – one might almost say eponymous – thing.

The way Cambridge sat back on their lead does not bear describing. Sea-lions have sat better on beach-balls at their first rehearsal. But Fulham did not seem overwhelmingly interested in working an equaliser. Substitute John Evanson tried the quick way: a dive in the penalty area. It was badly done. Evanson looked like nothing so much as one of those frog-shaped fabric bean-bags, flopping into the lap of Mother Earth. Great was the derision of the crowd, who by this time were too sweaty to care whether the ref blew or not.

So United bumbled their way to a middling win in a middling season, and six and a half thousand of us oozed home wondering, under skies now fleeced with strands of Jimmy Hill's father's beard, what un-middling football looked like. That night, on *Match of the Day*, we were shown: Liverpool were in imperious form, spreading the ball wide as though along greased chutes, and keeping the through ball, nine times out of ten, severely on the floor.

Of course, Liverpool came out on Monday afternoon feeling understandably arrogant, and were duly poleaxed by their neo-bogey team Aston Villa. But I don't think it should be forgotten that the single goal they got in that game was their *seventieth*, and that the three Villa goals brought their 'against' tally up to *fourteen*. If it were any other team, we'd all be amazed. Other notable statistics as we near the end: Nottingham Forest have still lost only twice, and though they have a low-scoring reputation it should be remarked that Everton, the team nobody likes except Ever-

tonians, have scored only the same number (50) in five games more. Even Middlesbrough, if I may put it like that, have scored 50 goals this season. Apart from the three clubs we have assumed will take the drop, nobody has won fewer matches than Norwich: seven in all, with 21 draws. It would be unkind to suggest that we have heard less of John Bond's evangelism on behalf of open, attacking football recently; but on the other hand he has won seven, lost a boring ten. A season of consolidation?

That's what we all hoped, anyway, at Cambridge. For those of us not 101 per cent attached to the local side, the afternoon had been chiefly notable for giving us small circumstantial hints of a whole new ball game; cricket. Sunstruck, I had invested, heavily, in a hard-back Wisden that very morning; and it is into the deeps of that strange publication that this column will dive next week.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Sing Goddamm

Love's Labour's Lost Aldwych
Chicago Cambridge

Love's Labour's Lost might seem to you and me the most vernal of Shakespeare's plays, but John Barton thinks otherwise. He has set it in the season, if not specifically of mists and mellow fruitfulness, at least of stooped trees, brownish leaves, ochre light, and whatever else lies within the Aldwych's modest resources. The reason for this apparent perversity becomes clear at the end, when, you'll recall, the rollicking comes to an abrupt stop with the appearance of a messenger in black. The death he announces is not simply that of the King of France. It's also the death of youth and irresponsibility, the end of a summer-time fling that, as everyone now recognises, has gone on too long. Mutton has been frisking about like lamb, or, as Berowne more tactfully explains to the four women, 'for your fair sakes have we neglected time'. To quote Pound: Winter is icumen in, lhude sing Goddamm.

This is a justly celebrated theatrical moment – the one in which the apprentice Shakespeare sneaks us a preview of the profound perspectives of his work to come – and Barton has built a beautifully sombre scene around it. Already, Carmen du Sautoy's bluestocking Princess has given Richard Griffith's roly-poly King of Navarre an unusually hard time for frivolously taking and then lightly breaking the oath to renounce women for books and society for study. In fact, her obvious contempt has reduced him to a state of shambling, bashful dejection. Now he and his fellow-perjurers must redeem themselves by atonement. For once, we feel that the tasks the young women impose on their lovers at the play's denouement aren't just romantic forfeits skittishly demanded and easily paid, but important obligations which may actually prove too onerous. For once, we realise that what's being negotiated isn't a droll variation

on the conventionally happy ending, but the 'world-without-end bargain' that the Princess declares marriage to be.

Not that Mr Barton's production lacks fun, or at least what those of us who prefer the wry to the broad would define as fun. It finds it in Paul Brooke's ponderously ruminative Holofernes, in Tony Church's seed Armado, and, less predictably, in its royal love-birds: Ms du Sautoy in specs and stringy ginger locks, plausibly suggesting that the Princess is touchy to the point of paranoia about her plain-Jane looks, and Mr Griffiths's school-swot Navarre, blinking at her from his pimply dough-face. This match, uniquely in my experience, has a solid reality than that of those traditional scene-stealers, Rosaline and Berowne, though Jane Lapotaire plays her with a nice sense of erotic mischief and Michael Pennington him with – well, here's my one quarrel with the production. If Berowne's penance is to learn seriousness by cheering up the terminally ill, isn't it essential for him to lack seriousness in the first place? Mr Pennington's attitude towards love varies from disbelief to outrage to an awe so eloquent that the first-night audience spontaneously applauded it: but it could never be called shallow, nor could he himself be mistaken for the witty idler Rosaline describes in her last speech. Berowne should surely imply the possibility of depth, not speak to us from four fathoms down, which is where this one spends most of the evening. No wonder Mr Pennington looks so surprised at the end: he no more needs a cure for levity than, say, John Knox needed a course of aversion therapy for alcoholism.

It's rare to find a popular musical with any social edge at all, so it may seem ungrateful to complain that *Chicago* plugs a contemporary cliché past the point of obsession. That is, however, part of the truth. Roxie Hart, who has casually shot her fickle lover, is transformed into a celebrity by a slick lawyer and a mawkish press. Her very knickers raise several hundred dollars at auction. She is occasionally upstaged during her stint in jail, notably by a quantitatively superior rival from uptown ('Berserk Filly Fells Three'), but her actual trial is a considerable theatrical triumph, a collaborative deceit worthy of Mrs Henry Wood at her most melodramatic and the late Godfrey Winn at his spongiest. After her acquittal she and another murderess go (where else?) into vaudeville, and end the evening reassuring the faithless that they are 'living examples of what a wonderful country this is'.

In a nation where fame is the great good and obscurity the great evil, crime becomes a branch of showbiz, complete with its own impresarios, playhouses, star-system and even reviewers. That's the belief of Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse, co-adaptors of a 1926 play based on one of Cook County's more notorious perversions of justice; and that's what they reiterate in number after number. The attorney, his lounge-lizard's hair lacquered and polished, teeters down a central staircase to be greeted by half-naked lovelies with heart-shaped fans; a Greek girl, convicted of axe-murder, coyly clambers up to a trapeze, only to find that the wire sustaining her is a noose; a press conference becomes a piece of bravura ventriloquism, with the client mouthing defence counsel's lines from his knee; Roxie's courtroom is crammed with ogling, singing clowns, acrobats and circus freaks. Yet a

platitudinous predictability is not the whole truth. The monotony of the basic idea is, it must be admitted, much alleviated by the visual invention, by the odd lyric or snatch of music that actually earns the comparison with Weill it seems to seek, and by some of the acting, particularly Antonia Ellis's spoiled-cherub Roxie. One should be able to add the dancing to this catalogue of virtues, but the production hies from Sheffield Playhouse, a company whose enterprise in transporting an American success across the ocean is not accompanied by any American discipline or dazzle on its pins. In one number the singer actually mimes the leaps, back-somersaults and whirling circles her transatlantic precursor must surely have made.

Films

John Coleman

Thanatographic

The End (AA) Cinecenta; Classic, Oxford Street; Odeons, Westbourne Grove and Swiss Cottage

Madame Rosa (AA) Screen on the Hill

The Water Babies (U) Classic, Oxford Street

Battlestar Galactica (U) Empire

Flexing his eyebrows, or maybe knitting them (as if to some women's magazine pattern of what the sexy male is super-optically about this year), Burt Reynolds has taken on death for his second excursion into directing himself. This bland grinner, to the dim many the Seventies' echo of Cary Grant, follows the energetic unpleasantness of his first try, *Gator* (frantic antics anent a Southern moonshiner), with a rather good if extended joke about a man given not more than a year to live and bothered by the fact and thinking that suicide may be the pre-emptive answer. Mr Reynolds, after *macho* exposure that would have done in a lesser man and may have, seems sensibly to have settled for sending himself – or his screen persona – way up.

The End opens, beneath the credits, to his plaintive voice against nurses. 'Could I hold on to it a little longer? It keeps my hands warm,' he pleads, having made water in a bottle. Rapidly, he is heard moaning to a doctor: 'It's the same thing that Ali MacGraw had in *Love Story*.' Under both moustache and beard, Reynolds is a coward like the rest of us, hairy but naked. He has desperately un-reassuring doctors: 'I've seen some of these cases go in three months,' says one. Another, a genial death therapist (Carl Reiner), himself two years overdue for the morgue, strenuously reaches for a file on similar cases and drops cold on the spot. Reiner, of course, has been involved in a number of sick-funny events, as writer for *Where's Poppa?* and others, as bit-part actor, as someone around Mel Brooks. His presence here is significant. The clean blackness of Brooksonian laughter, otherwise known as the risky rictus syndrome, is omnipresent.

Sonny Lawson (Mr Reynolds that crucial shade more appealing than hitherto) has an ex-wife (Joanne Woodward), a super daugh-

ter (Kristy McNichol), unwitting parents (Myrna Loy, who turns the TV up, while uttering, 'I hope you can stay; we never talk'; and Pat O'Brien, who is even nuller, painting by numbers, nicely). There is also his mistress, a slummock, Mary Ellen (Sally Field, of the slipped, wide-open, near-pretty grimacing phiz), who lives in a merry, natural squalor of her own. 'I guess I was going for a pity-fuck,' he admits, and then complains, 'the least you could do for a dying man is to come'. The piece, written by Jerry Belson – who wrote Michael Ritchie's *Smile* – and that no mean feat, is not about to mince its language. It has an imperfectly splendid role for Dom DeLuise, another Mel Brooks stalwart, here a nutter who promises to aid Sonny/Burt to an early grave and schizzes on about his dire Polish upbringing: his father was ultra-Polack – 'the only man who could sweat while he was swimming'; a nose-picking contest 'and he won'; Dom took a girlfriend home and dad announced that he thought Moby Dick was a venereal disease; when they come for Dom in the funny-farm, even the black attendant, about to bind him, proposes, 'Just think of it as a Polish dinner jacket'. Mr Reynolds and Mr DeLuise here have excellent bits of a vaudeville act.

Unfortunately, more about the accidental way of death had been promised. Satire slopes down to farce. It is entirely possible that illuminati of the deep dark of film art will, anyway, throw this away as being too verbal. The wordsmith in me makes no apologies for relishing its good gags. Cinema happily remains a bastard activity and it will entertain as it may: theatre, painting, words, the lot. That *The End* is closer to Neil Simon than to Mel Brooks than to Ingmar Bergman is not its fault: it is its aim. But death stays a serio-comic subject, unexplored.

Moshe Mizrahi's *Madame Rosa* picked up an American Oscar in 1978 for the Best Foreign Film of '77. Which goes to show what our transatlantic cousins look for in European output. Simone Signoret – establish it quickly – has been my fantasy-woman, pin-up-girl, what-you-will – ever since Jacques Becker's sun-struck, gangster-and-tart movie, largely centred on Belleville, *Casque d'Or* (1952). A lot of Seine had passed under the *ponts* since then and Signoret has let herself go with the current too. How else to explain this abominable tear-jerker, except as an act of bravado on the part of its superlative lady-star? She plays the adipose, wheezing, bag-eyed woman of the title, a superannuated whore (after she reached 50, it was no longer 'aesthetic'), reduced to vaguely looking after the spawn of clumsy harlots: she – Madame Rosa – is accorded a measure of magnificence by the scriptwriter, working from a novel one conceives as being neater, more decisive; is beautifully set by Bernard Everin in a sixth-floor apartment and elsewhere; is photographed, with a backward-look by Nestor Almendros, who also got an Oscar for his more recent, *American Days of Heaven*.

Something one hesitates to commit to print; but it is as if there were two pressures acting on this sterling one-time stunner: that she can still stun, by some damnable force of nature and will; and that she is now *jemenfoutiste* beyond any recall she cares about. I think the film, which deals in her being a world-weary, dying surrogate-mother, notably to an Arab lad, Momo (stoically found in the cool-faced Samy Ben Youb) is a dreadful sell-out,

gauged to a soft, unthink solution to Arab-Israeli conflicts. The 14-year-old, whom she claims to be only 11, finally pretends to be sending her to a 'family' in the promised land, while he quietly helps her to die in her *trou juif* or basement hide-out in Belleville, where she recaptures a god-denying past of a time in Auschwitz. Cosmetics play a large part – her lipstick, the boy's scenting himself and, later, her stinking corpse – and the sense of a very commercial *déjà-vu* grows as an ailing Doctor Katz (Claude Dauphin, an aged revenant from that *Casque d'Or*) is carried upstairs to spell bad news. There are good lines, good scenes; but this is basically a happy melodrama for all the human family. It's somewhat as if the French cinema of the Forties had been reading its own belated notices and trying to recapture a Renoir-Carné-Becker sense of where they were at.

Even the whore with a heart of gold is a black ex-boxer transvestite. As for using Gene Kelly throating 'Singing in the Rain', well, constant readers will know how I feel about that.

Little space and little to say: Lionel Jeffries's rendition of *The Water Babies* has merit in its live-action material, goes horrendously Disney-at-worst in its sub-aqueous, animated-in-Poland section, and should never have been on. The child-actors are fine and Billie Whitelaw is super. Charles Kingsley, who wrote the original in 1863, must be flinching in his Jungle-Booked resting-place. *Battlestar Galactica* is TV hardware set to Sensurround, i.e. hurtling models, plastic people, silly story, throbbing auditorium. Let me quote the sage warning, screened as openers: 'The management assumes no responsibility for the physical and emotional reactions of the viewer'. Right on.

Weekend Competition

No 2562

Set by Arthur Ritus

The NS Spring books list included the Letters of both Evelyn Waugh and D. H. Lawrence. Since Lawrence died in 1930, when Waugh was a rising star, it's just possible that the two corresponded. Imagine such an exchange of letters; or, if you prefer, write a single letter from one to the other.

Result of No 2559

Set by Dan Drough, B.Sc.

We asked you to rewrite any well-known lyric in the style of Lennon and McCartney.

Report

by Jerry Attrick

A jolly comp this, with a fine spread of entries reflecting Early, Middle and late L & M; so you get all the space this week. A near miss for John Winlo; six quid each, plus Rooms (thanks again ever so, Routledge & Kegan Paul) to Parrott, Marks and Norman.

My Way, Cynera

Yesternight,
Cynara appeared and caused a blight
On my passionate embraces – right?
It broke my soul, did Yesternight.
Suddenly, there was her red mouth in front of me,
I had someone else in bed, you see –
Oh, Yesternight came suddenly.
Why I had to go, I just don't know,
I couldn't fight.
I was desolate,
I'm faithful to her sigh-igh-ight.
Yesternight, I got drunk just to avoid my plight,
But her shadow made me sick with fright –
Oh, I remembered, yesternight.

WILL BELLENGER

Get Out

Hey Maud come out come out come out
there are no bats about in the garden
and if there are I beg your pardon
the night is over you'll agree
and so there's only me
Hey Maud hey Maud I won't be ignored
don't harden your heart come down the garden
on the scene is Venus
it's near morning almost dawning
the group that played all night
has quit this gig all right
all right all right all right hey Maud
be a sport get on your way Maud hey hey hey.

E.O. PARROT

Lay That Head

Sleep, baby, sleep,
While I watch you wide awake;
I feel you're real but I'm a fake,
And I wonder what you're doing
Screwing such a creep.

The years roll by
And steal our youth,
But here I lie
And love the truth.

Snore, baby, snore,
Maybe we all kid ourselves
And try too hard to rid ourselves
Of the knowledge that the lonely
Only want to score.

NAOMI MARKS

Dover Blues

Yes I'm standing on the beach
Well I don't want to make no speech
But I can't help feeling kinda blue
When I listen to the waves with you.

You know I used to feel so assured
I was in touch with my sweet Lord
But now those things that seemed
so beautiful and new
Can only make me feel sad and blue.

Well as we listen to the roaring sea
As you walk along the sand with me
There's only one thing I wanna say to you –
To one another we gotta be true.

PETER NORMAN

Oh Blub Blub

Lucy was a maiden in the spa of Dove,
I am just another Lakeland hack:
But I say to Lucy, girl you had no love
And seemed a violet off the beaten track . . .

Oh! blub-blub, Oh-bla-da, life has gone, bah!
Lala how the life has gone
Oh! blub-blub, Oh-bla-da, life has gone, bah!
Lala how the life has gone.

Lucy was not known and died her death alone,
I called her my single shining star;
Now she's in her grave, I hang my head and moan,
And I sing this as she's buried by the spa . . .

Oh! blub-blub, Oh! bla-da, life has gone, bah!
Lala how the life has gone . . .

BILL GREENWELL



Tony Miles Chess

No 129

Chess by Telephone

Chess by telephone and, more recently, by telex, has become quite commonplace. Neither medium has struck me as particularly satisfactory. The major difficulty is, of course, the time lost in transmission of moves, but the aspect I dislike most is the lack of atmosphere brought about by the absence of one's opponent. However, I was interested to receive an invitation to the first Confravision tournament. Confravision is basically a set of conference studios scattered around the country linked by close circuit television.

The tournament, sponsored by the Scottish Telecommunications Board, was a sort of mini Home International Championship. Craig Pritchett represented Scotland from Glasgow, George Botterill Wales from Bristol, Paul Henry Ireland from Manchester (as yet there aren't any studios in the latter

two countries) and I represented England from Birmingham. Each player had 15 minutes per game.

When either player was thinking, the monitors would show both players and clearly visible clocks recording their thinking times. When a move was played the monitors would switch to the demonstration boards on which the moves were transmitted. Transmission times were creditably low — even my first round game which lasted 79 moves took scarcely more than 50 minutes and technically the event was a great success.

I needed only to draw the final game to avoid a play-off. Sinking to the occasion I produced a stream of exceedingly boring moves very quickly until Pritchett, down to his last five seconds, had the bright idea of offering a draw. With Henry beating Botterill in the remaining game this left me first with $2\frac{1}{3}$, Pritchett second with $1\frac{1}{2}$ and Botterill and Henry third equal with 1.

White: G S Botterill

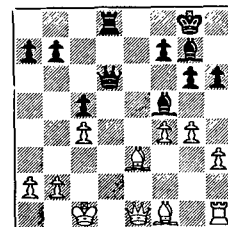
Black: A J Miles

1.P-Q4, P-Q4; 2.P-QB4, PxP; 3.N-KB3, N-KB3; 4.Q-R4ch!? An unusual line presumably intended to surprise me. 4... N-B3; 5.N-B3, N-Q4!? Black wants to hang on to the gambit pawn with... N-N3. Probably White should try 6.P-K4, N-N3; 7.Q-Q1 with some play. 6.QxBP?! (N-Q4)-N5! Very embarrassing! 7.Q-N3, P-K4!? Not a bad move at the best

of times, but in a quick game almost decisive. 8.P-QR3? Taking the pawn is a better try. 8... B-K3; 9.Q-Q1, PxP; 10.N-QN5; On 10.PxN, BxP with a solid extra pawn. Now if 10... N-Q4; 11.N(5)xQP and White's all right. But 10... P-QR3! Now if 11.PxN, PxN; 12.RxR, QxR and 13.NxP is impossible owing to... BxPch. 11.N(N5)xQP, NxN; 12.NxN, QxN! Now White noticed that 13.PxN allows BxPch 14.B-Q2, 0-0-0! (but not R-Q1? Q-R4ch?) mating quickly. 13.QxQ. Resigns is slightly more accurate. 13... N-B7ch; 14.K-Q1, NxQ; 15.P-QN4, 0-0-0; 16.B-Q2, N-N6; 17.R-R2, B-K2; 18.P-K3, B-B3; 19.K-K2, N-Q5ch; 20.PxN, BxR; 21. B-K3, BxP; 22.P-N3, B-B5ch; 23.K-Q2, BxBch; 24.KxB, KR-K1ch; Resigns.

Problem 129

Black to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than 2 May.

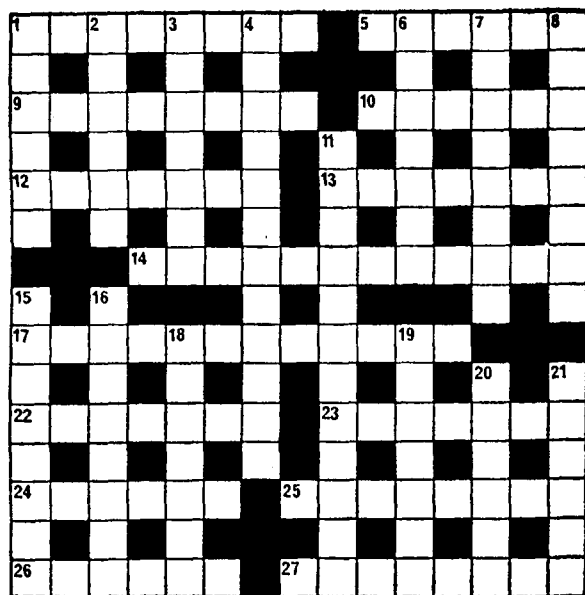


Solution to Problem 127

1.B-R3! QXB 2.RxP! Resigns. Black cannot prevent the twin mating threats of RxR and BxB.

Weekend Crossword 1300

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1300, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 1 May.



ACROSS

- 1 Confusion caused by hot-head in motorway accident (8).
- 5 Brutal treatment for the spring border? (6).
- 9 Cricketers who follow Daddy? (8).
- 10 It is a wonder a river runs in the reverse of fixed courses (6).
- 12 The deed to take advantage of (7).
- 13 God would be discovered if the wicked went round the Turk's Head (7).
- 14 Disagreements which make relations act strangely (12).
- 17 Customs about shuffling cards in springtime activities (12).
- 22 Russian hero has to smile about a title (7).
- 23 Be better than gold though not in the home (7).
- 24 'There's small choice in rotten —' (*Taming of the Shrew*) (6).
- 25 Bird nearly all clever and smart (8).

26 Game which gives wrong return to a number (6).

27 In communications the officers grow old (8).

DOWN

- 1 The all-rounder is not so good after getting his thousand (6).
- 2 Colony of wild ponies (6).
- 3 Plant which makes an unusual film on a liquid (7).
- 4 Glimpse a football team playing without practice (12).
- 6 'The — and not the deed Confounds us' (*Macbeth*) (7).
- 7 Hire pony turned into former Derby winner (8).
8. Philosopher in a haze about an examination (8).
- 11 Sad record being played after it is time for bed? (12).
- 15 He goes abroad but puts me up with a single allowance (8).
- 16 Bird which goes to a cooking vessel without a cloth (8).

18 One of those people for whom a king turns up in the heart of a goddess (7).

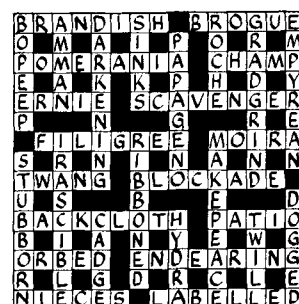
19 Is alluring but possibly that is scent (7).

20 Plane which is like nothing in existence (6).

21 A number of debauchees go for the birds (6).

SET SQUARE

Solution to No 1298



Prizewinners to No 1298

Neil Drysdale (W. Lothian)
A. Morrison (Aylesbury)
Dr Mercer (London W13)

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Head of Education Department Vacancy

Applications are invited for the post of Head of the Education Department at CPSA Headquarters. The post is newly-created, arising from a decision to split the present Organisation and Education Department into two separate Departments. The work will comprise administrative duties together with lecturing at various union courses and preparation of educational programmes etc. The successful applicant will have specialist knowledge, with wide experience in the trade union education field. The starting pay is £6,448.50 per annum, rising by five annual increments to a maximum of £7,543.50, including Inner London Weighting. There is a non-contributory superannuation scheme providing for a pension and lump sum at the retiring age of 60. Full details will be supplied with the application form which can be obtained from the: **Assistant General Secretary, CPSA, 215 Balham High Road, London SW17 7BQ.** The closing date for receipt of applications is 2 May 1979.

Trade Union Information/Research Worker

Leeds TUCRIC (Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre) provides an information and research service for local trade unions, community groups and women's groups.

We require an information/research worker to develop local trade union contacts, assess the means by which TUCRIC can best serve their information needs and deal with specific inquiries and research.

Preference will be given to candidates who have had experience in the trade union movement, particularly manual trade unions. Local knowledge (Leeds, West Yorkshire) would also be an asset.

The worker will be responsible to the local management committee and funded by the Community Projects Foundation; salary scale: AP3 - AP5 (£3,732-£5,073). Starting date: 1 June.

Further details from:

The Secretary,
TUCRIC Management Committee,
29 Blenheim Terrace,
Leeds 2.

Closing date for applications:
1 May.

CENTRAL REGISTER AND CLEARING HOUSE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

preferably graduates, required to organise two sections of the educational organisation. Must be experienced correspondents. One post includes statistical work. Salary NJC scales £3,700-£4,167 (review 1 July). Written applications (no forms) to: Miss E. B. Sowerbutts, 3 Crawford Place, London W1H 2BN.

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ASTMS

Health and Safety Researcher

We require a Researcher to be based at our Health and Safety Office at Whitehall College, Bishop's Stortford. The job involves extracting information on all aspects of health and safety at work. The applicant would be expected to draft guidance for members, prepare evidence on specific hazards and topics as required and advise.

The applicant should have the relevant scientific, technical and professional qualifications. Some background in toxicology would be helpful and experience of trade union work in the health and safety field would be an advantage.

S/he would be directly responsible to our Health and Safety Officer with dotted-line link to the Director of Research.

Salary £5,015 p.a., hours 34, holidays 5 weeks.

Applications enclosing details of qualifications, experience etc. and names of two referees should be sent to: Sheila McKechnie, Whitehall College, Dane O'Coys Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, by 4 May.

SOUTH BANK POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS' UNION

Administrative Officer

The Students Union wishes to invite applications for the Senior post of Administrative Officer.

Duties include overall administration of the union, a personnel function, the management of union services and assisting in negotiations with the Polytechnic and other authorities.

The successful candidate should preferably be a graduate, have experience of working with young people or some experience of Student Union's and have an adequate understanding of administrative skills.

Salary scale GLC/ILEA E3 £5,500-£5,900 p.a.

Application forms are available from: the General Secretary, South Bank Polytechnic Students' Union, Rotary Street, London SE1. Tel. 01-261 1525. Closing date 9 May 1979.

SECTIONAL EDUCATION OFFICER

— SCOTTISH SECTION

CO-OPERATIVE UNION LTD

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Further details and application form from: The Chief Education Officer, Co-operative Union Limited, Stanford Hall, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE12 5QR.

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Application forms and further particulars from the Staff Officer, Portsmouth Polytechnic, Alexandra House, Museum Road, Portsmouth, PO1 2QQ, to whom completed applications should be returned by 8 May 1979, quoting Reference No. K38.

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

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Further particulars may be obtained from The Registrar, The University of Hull, Hull HU6 7RX to whom applications, naming two referees, should be sent by 18 May 1979.

Studentships

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Applicants must hold (or expect to obtain in the summer of 1979) a first or upper second class honours degree, or a master's degree, of a UK university or the CNAA. Applicants should write to Dr P. R. Sharp, School of Education, The University, Leeds LS2 9JT, from whom further particulars may be obtained.

Awards

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SSRC AREA AWARDS SCHEME

The University invites applications to compete under the SSRC Area Awards scheme from candidates who have or hope to obtain good Honours degrees and wish to undertake research in African Studies, for which the University is an approved institution under this scheme. Candidates wishing to be considered should communicate as soon as possible with the Secretary, African Studies Group, King's College, Aberdeen.

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CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY — because of the General Election, all evening meetings have been cancelled. Next meeting AGM 9 May.

CSE/CAPITAL & CLASS DAYSCHOOL, Sunday 29 April, 10.30 a.m. at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. 'The Struggle Against Fascism & Nazism'. 'The Labour Process and Socialism'. Discussion of Capital & Class 7, available from CSE, 55 Mount Pleasant, London WC1.

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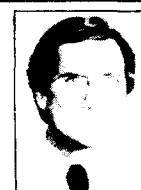
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